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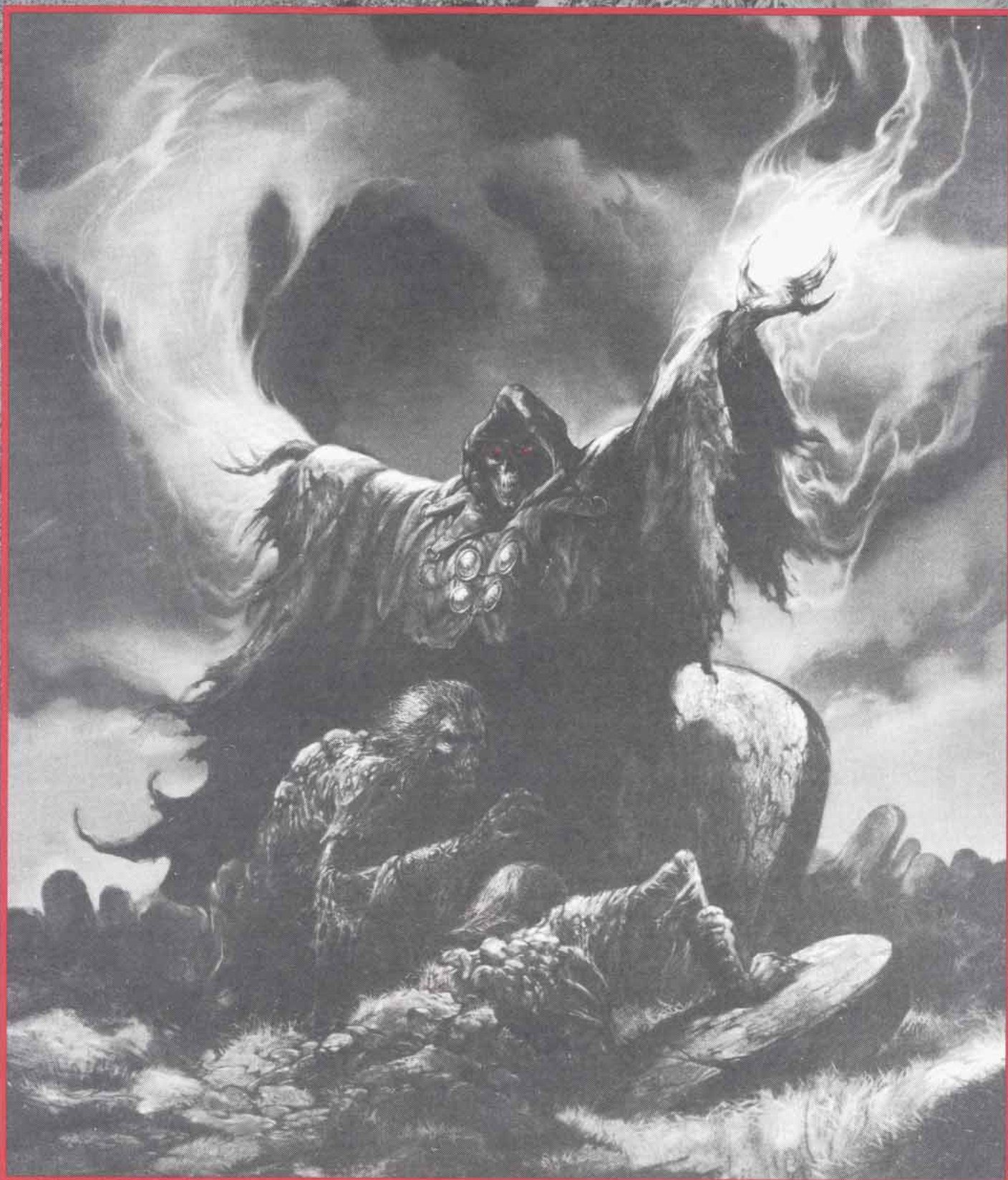
Ravenloft™

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Van Richten's Guide to the Lich



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INTRODUCTION



D

*Death be not proud, though some
have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not
so,
For those whom thou think'st thou
dost overthrow
Die not, poor Death, nor yet canst
thou kill me.*

—John Donne

Who knows what arcane experiments are carried out by powerful wizards secluded in their mystical towers? We who are uninitiated to the machinations of spells and other magical phenomena can only wonder about the events that take place in a mage's private study. We can only barely fathom the voluminous tomes of secret knowledge upon which these men and women pour their attentions.

The fruits of such labor can be of wondrous benefit to persons throughout the lands. A goodly wizard's reward is the admiration and gratitude of us all, and the knowledge and satisfaction that our world has benefited and is a better place to raise our children.

On the other hand, a mage also may elect to call forth the most vile creatures and evil magicks we could imagine.

Sometimes, in exchange for assisting evil agents who desire a foothold into our realm, these unwise mages are granted great powers to wield over their fellow man. And I fear that there are too many mages who pursue this opportunity over the considerations of the state of our world. For these mages, treachery awaits. Wizards who follow evil paths do not understand that one cannot trust a creature that, by its nature, lives to betray.

Still other mages seek those secrets of power, themselves. They hope to gain knowledge that evil and powerful creatures jealously guard for themselves. Such a mage believes that it is better to enter the perilous halls of power

himself, using his own efforts, than to rely upon the questionable graces of others. The magnitude of this struggle is great. There are many secrets that evil uses to pervert our world—secrets so elusive that a mortal must expend every ounce of his (or her) strength and spirit to acquire them.

This devotion is, no doubt, the means by which the mage is subverted, changed. He loses sight of the pursuits of normal life and becomes obsessed with seeking the keys to power. Eventually, the mage realizes that he cannot learn those secrets in his short lifetime. He finds that he must secure a method of continuing his researches and experiments for years, perhaps even centuries, to come.

For this incredibly ambitious wizard, there is but one way: he must transform himself into a different creature, one that will outlive his mortal shell so that he might continue his arcane efforts.

During a full moon, this mage imbibes a potion that instantly kills him—yet his spirit survives! His spirit actually dispossesses itself of his body. While in this state, the spirit acclimates itself to dark energies that are the source of pure evil. The spirit of the wizard becomes sympathetic to the heart of evil so that it may learn new and more potent secrets in the future.

The spirit eventually returns to the body, but in the interim the body shrivels and mummifies into a twisted mask of death. This corpse rises from its own grave, eyes alight with a scarlet lust for knowledge and power. The mage has died, yet it lives now and forever as a corpse. Now it has the means to pursue its twisted—nay, *mangled*—destiny.

Perhaps after this vile transformation, the mage within the crusted shell revels in its accomplishment. If so, it will likely be the last true human feeling the wizard experiences, for he has consigned himself to an eternal existence that denies the sweet fruits of mortality and replaces them with the sour rewards of the pursuit of evil.

The mage has forsaken his mortal identity

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altogether. Now it adopts a name which it feels is more appropriate to its station. Whatever arcane synonym for evil the creature takes, we will know it for what it truly is: *lich*. It is a name to be uttered with cursed breath and contempt.

My Path to the Dread Arcane

I dislike expounding upon myself and my exploits for two reasons: First, I am by nature a reticent man with little inclination to boast of or excuse my actions and, second, I have no wish to expose too much of myself to those who would see me halted in my quest to destroy the living dead. If there is one thing that the lich has taught me, it is that knowledge is the greatest of all powers, and so I would not have my enemies know too much of me.

Nevertheless, I cannot expect the reader to accept this treatise without some qualification. Therefore, I will briefly introduce myself and then explain my involvement with and study of one of the most deadly beings to poison the

land with its ruthless ambitions.

I was a doctor by profession, and might have happily remained so had the black hand of Fate not closed upon me. One day, my beloved son was kidnapped by the Vistani—curse their gypsy hearts forever—and sold to a vampire, a blood-drinking creature of the night who masqueraded as an honorable nobleman named Baron Metus. Even now it rends my heart to explain that I was forced to lay my own son to rest at the point of a wooden stake!

Baron Metus, in retaliation, murdered my beautiful wife, and thus was I cast out of happiness forever. Once I sipped the finest wine of family bliss, but now I choke on the bitter dregs of revenge!

Vampires became the first targets of my vengeance, and I dedicated myself to learning all that was humanly possible to know about them. I lost many friends and comrades along the way, each for whom I would weep fresh tears at every sunset, had they not been as dedicated to the cause of justice as am I. It is

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also of some comfort that their bloody sacrifices have yielded invaluable information, culminating in an extended treatise on vampires—a volume which I pray will save countless spirits from eternal slavery. It is with great satisfaction that I proclaim that Baron Metus is now a pile of dust in a sunny meadow.

It was not long before my notoriety as a vampire hunter led me to the study of incorporeal undead. These beings also have taken their toll upon me and those whom I hold dear. In fact, I have felt the chilling touch of a ghost upon my own breast, and I have lost precious years from my life. I even have had to study entire volumes of *my own* research in order to relearn knowledge lost to the memory-sapping grip of one peculiar night phantom.

After the completion of my meditation on ghosts, there was a brief time when I hoped that I might finally lay down my sagely mantle and retire, but that sweet dream may be forever beyond my grasp. I have realized that the land of the Mists is populated with a multitude of strange and evil things, but few are those who will chase them down and kill them once and for all. It occurs to me that I have accrued extremely specialized experience that too many others have died pursuing. If I quit now, others will perish where I might succeed. And, I guess, a few more scars upon my heart and body may preserve the freshness and innocence of others.

With these convictions upon me, I am compelled by conscience and need to take up the quill and parchment and write of one of the most vile, damnable beasts to plague the world, the lich.

I first became aware of these creatures through a wizard friend of mine, named Shauten. Shauten was one of my comrades-at-arms in the battle against darkness, and a powerful one at that. He was ever-secretive, ever-enigmatic, yet I accepted his eccentricities because his part in my cause was indispensable. More than once Shauten cast a last-moment spell that saved us all.

Yet Shauten's own agenda might be called

traitorous by some. His part in our hunt for the most powerful of the undead was but a quest for knowledge of the necromantic. As our association lengthened, Shauten grew increasingly withdrawn, preoccupied with research of his own.

In the end, I learned of his attempt to make the leap to immortality—he attempted to deprive me of my heart, to facilitate his transformation to lichdom. Of course, he relented at the last moment, and I believe in my heart that his feelings of friendship for me ultimately spoiled his most crucial spell and saved my life. For that—for *all* the times he saved my life—and for the invaluable information that he imparted along the way, I shall always name him “friend.”

The Lich of Darkon

I am afraid that there is a lich among us. I shudder at the realization that this monster has been in a position of ultimate power over us for as long as anyone here can remember.

Our illustrious ruler, Lord Azalin, is almost surely a lich!

I fear that he is no more the wizard-king he outwardly claims to be than it is safe to walk the countryside at night during a full moon. I know not what he called himself—what his true name was—before he transformed himself to lichdom. It does not matter, though, since that person died with the drinking of the lethal potion which began the ritual.

What is important for us to keep at the forefront of our thoughts is that we may be living under the rule of someone who is far from human. Although there has been talk of his extended life span, of how it seems he has outlived everyone in the entire realm, and how this has been achieved through his own magic—it is not true. If he is indeed a lich, then we must somehow, through some monumental effort, drive him from our land.

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My Discovery

My knowledge of our ruler's true nature was not clear to me at first. It was Shauten who put me on the scent that led me to the discovery. We were in a carriage on the road between Il Aluk and Rivalis, in my native Darkon. It was during the day, as we had left at the break of dawn in order to reach our destination before nightfall.

We were passing through the forest, roughly at the midpoint between the two cities, when we rounded a sharp curve and found the road blocked. To my horror, I realized that the road was littered with corpses! I looked for an overturned carriage, thinking one might have taken the curve at too great a speed and turned to its side, but I saw none. My thoughts raced as I considered my function as a doctor. How would I care for so many people? How many could we take to Il Aluk for care, and how many would have to be left behind?

These thoughts were disrupted when Shauten alerted me to a more horrifying fact: the dead were rising and moving toward us!

Each of them appeared to have been rotting for months at the least. Their eye sockets glowed with a dull red gaze. They moved upon the carriage, making no sound save for their shuffling feet upon the dusty road.

I shouted to the driver to turn us around, but my call went unanswered. I exited the coach to see what had happened to him, and he was nowhere to be seen! I therefore took the reins of the horses myself, calling for the driver all the while. Shauten joined me at the driver's seat, and we turned the horses around quite easily; they were only too glad to retrace their steps. Nevertheless, the undead were upon us and it became necessary to fend them off.

I reached into my black satchel and produced my holy symbol—an iron and silver relic that has always afforded me protection—and thrust it confidently in their rotting faces. They immediately grabbed me and pulled me into their midst! It was the quick words and fingers of Shauten that blasted them clear of me and enabled our fortunate escape.

As I sent the horses into a gallop to carry us as quickly as possible from the encounter, I saw a lone, tall man, dressed in the finest robes, with a crown upon its head, and I recognized the raiment of Lord Azalin himself! And in that moment of recognition, I espied a bright crimson fire in his eyes to match that of his undead host, and I fancied that he appeared no more alive than any of them!

Later, when I remarked upon the monsters' immunity to my holy symbol, Shauten replied that they were minions of magic, not of death.

It was not until much later, when Shauten nearly consumed me in a necromantic rite of passage, that I made the connection between Azalin and his minions, and I knew that my land was ruled by the hand of Death.

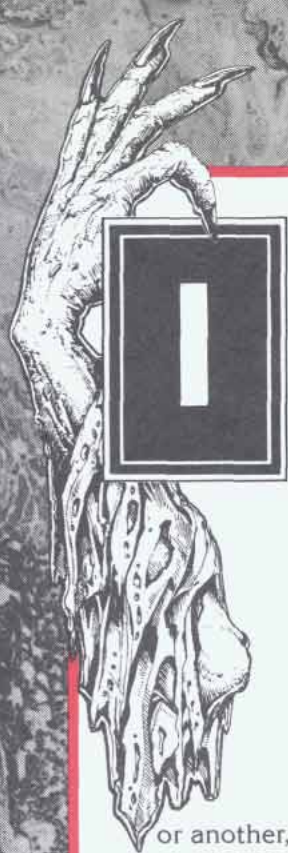
Now, with a core of research and yet a few more harrowing experiences behind me, I present the latest of my guides to the creatures of darkness. As always, the reader must bear in mind that the evidence presented herein is largely anecdotal and that nothing in these lands can be taken for the absolute truth. Still, if experience is the best teacher, then the reader may profit from this honest effort to expose the well-guarded secrets of the lich.

May it shed light upon the subject as the sun bears down upon the dusty remains of Baron Metus!

Editor's Note: Game applications of Dr. Van Richten's guide will appear in gray-screened text, each entry following the text to which it applies. Ideally, only the Dungeon Master will read the material contained in these blocks while players will learn through their characters' experiences. There is also an appendix following the "Conclusion," again strictly for the DM's eyes.

Note that the powers ascribed to liches herein are those which belong to those undead wizards of the RAVENLOFT® campaign environment. Refer to the *Monstrous Compendium* for more information regarding these monsters.

I: NECROLOGY



*Immortality is not a gift,
Immortality is an achievement;
And only those who strive mightily
Shall possess it.*

—Edgar Lee Masters

As many types and races of people are scattered over the land as there are species of wildflowers that wistfully dot the countryside. Strong elements of language, custom, and belief define these races, setting them apart from one another.

But there is one characteristic common to every sentient being: the quest for power.

Every creature has, at one time or another, wished that he had more control over his (or her, of course) destiny, that he had more power to realize his greatest potential. Such a dream might be as mundane as wishing for a good sword and the courage to assault an evil master or as grandiose as the conquest of a nation. Dreams such as this are what motivates a great many people to undertake adventuring and fortune-seeking.

It is, in theory, possible for a serf to become an emperor if his determination and body are strong. This would require an incredible struggle, for the typical serf starts with nothing, but by the grace of the gods and the strength in his heart, the slave may become a king. Power and glory are there for the taking, and such earthly happiness is attainable by anyone, as long as they can be satisfied with the *mere* conquest of the world.

If the adjective “mere” seems out of place in this context, the reader must have patience until the subject of this book is addressed.

The roguish fellow has an entirely different dream and a decidedly different method of seeing it become reality, but his highest goals are also firmly set in this world.

For priests, the most important quests of life are different. They have not so much to do with

power as with proving devotion to one's god or building a great temple where others can enjoy the hospitality of the priesthood and its religion. The greatest achievement of priestly glory lies not in this world, but the next.

Such is not the case with the mage, which brings us to the subject at hand.

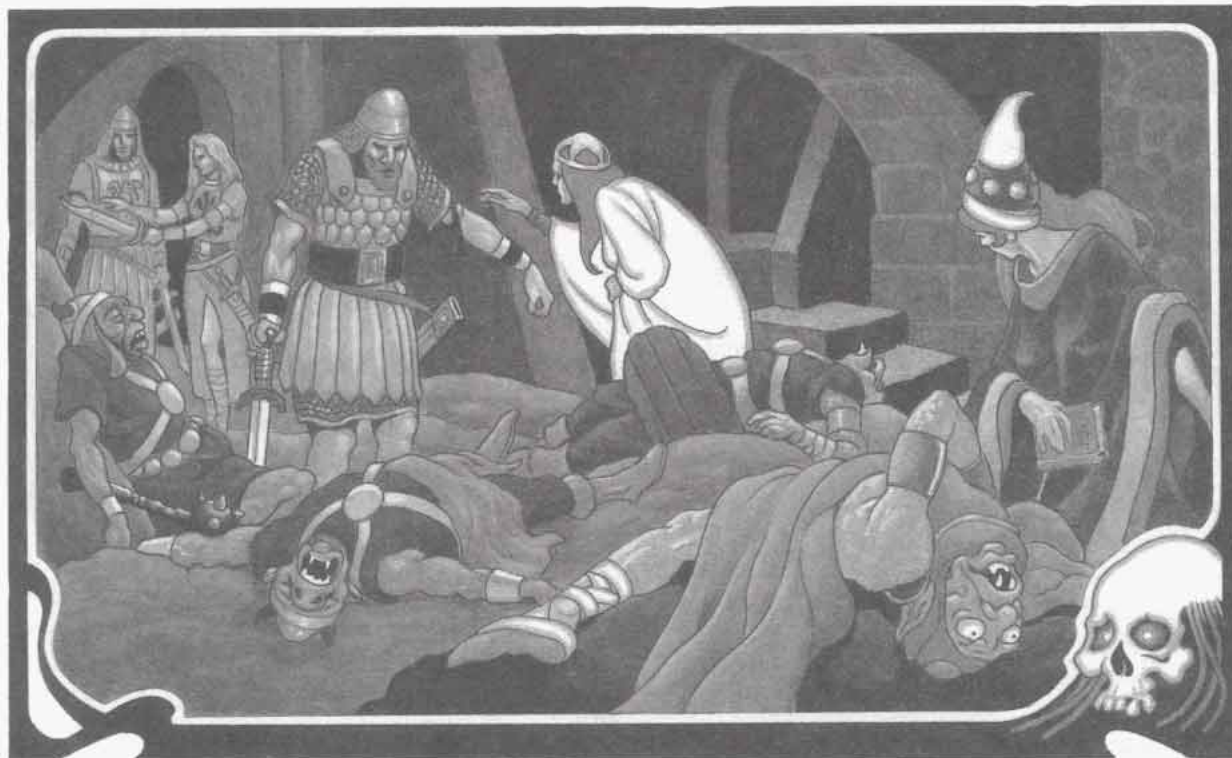
To become a mage, one must be exceptional in ability from the start. There are natural prerequisites—factors of intelligence, strength of personality, and persistence in the face of difficult matters of mind and body—which must be present to learn the secrets of magic.

Once some basic secrets are known, the mage can begin a pursuit which is endemic to all mages: acquiring the knowledge of more spells, the ability to command greater and greater magic. This is a struggle that continues throughout the career of the mage, and one that never truly sees an end. In other words, the wizard's life begins in excellence, but life is seldom long enough to realize the full potential of that preeminence.

There are always more spells to learn, more secrets to know. There are secrets that remain buried in arcane texts which have gone unread for thousands of years. There are puzzles that unlock the mysteries of the universe and lead to whole new planes of existence. For a mage who is foremost a scholar, these are secrets that *must* be found. The passion to learn more is a driving flame within a mage's heart and spirit, a part of what makes him what he is.

For the mage, *knowledge equals power*, and the acquisition of unlimited knowledge often seems to be within his grasp. Whereas the serf begins in an environment where the ability to shape destiny is as rare as an eclipse, the mage begins his career already wielding power that only a few dream of manipulating. This power can become an insatiable drive that carries the wizard beyond a career pursuit. It can become an addiction of the mind and spirit, and build beyond a driving flame into an insidious inferno that burns a mage hollow of other qualities from the inside out, until only the desire for more, ever *more* magical power remains.

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In this quest for knowledge, some mages pass a point where the unthinkable no longer exists. They pursue for long years the secrets of a certain arcane ritual which will grant them a twofold prize: knowledge of forbidden secrets and the acquisition of power that is unmatched—power to be gained over the span of an eternal life, or rather, *unlife*. If one can become a lich, then he or she will become the most powerful form of undead known!

The transformation of the mage's body into a lich grants incredible powers. The mortal individual that starts the ritual of transformation into a lich and the being that ultimately becomes a lich are no longer the same person. The lich is immensely powerful, and at the same time it is in a position to gain even *more* power and knowledge: a lich can exist for *centuries*, far outlasting any nonmagical race!

The lich's mind seems to withstand time very

well, too. While the psychology of a vampire often deteriorates with time, there is something about the transformation that allows the lich to remain sane—or at least motivated with its own goals, even though they may be unfathomable to humankind—during this virtual immortality.

With this amount of time, the lich can undertake projects that are so far reaching as to be beyond the scope of most mortals' apprehension. With enough time, knowledge of almost any secret can be gained.

What troubles me the most is that there are mages walking this world who would sacrifice not just their lives, but their very humanity—the qualities of emotion and love, the aspirations of mortals made in the image of the divine—just for the sake of *acquisition*. Such ambition makes any man dangerous, but if that man is made essentially immortal and given the power to realize his goals, then what hope is there for the world around him?

Risk Factors

I would like to propose an axiom: *One cannot acquire great power without already having it.*

This suggests the level of expertise necessary to become a lich and, hence, the power of that creature even at its inception. Given the relative rarity of liches in comparison to the number of evil creatures who aspire to such depths, it also suggests the inherent dangers involved in becoming an undead wizard. In fact, the quest for lichdom is a journey not taken lightly, for it is the most perilous a mage can perform.

First among the mage's risks is the peril of simply acquiring the scholarly texts concerning the ritual. Not surprisingly, there is no known common source of these texts anywhere. No mage can simply walk into a library or scrivener's and request the recipe for lichdom. Such texts are deadly in content, but they are just as deadly in their procurement, for the power they offer is potent and those who own them are most certainly neither weak nor willing to give them up!

And what if a source is false? The stakes of his life are what the mage is playing with when he judges one source accurate, another partially so, and a third flawed in total, for the test of his hypotheses will cost him his life. Whether or not the cost is permanent the wizard will not know until it's too late.

Origin of the Lich

One must wonder what texts the very first lich worked from, how that ill-fated mage first came by the formula that dispossessed his body of his spirit. The lich is a solitary creature that does not tell others how to join its ranks. The thought of it speaking to others at all on a civil basis without some devious ulterior motive is almost laughable. Even for the lich, the fewer that play its manipulative games, the better.

During my research, I came across a peculiar item (translated here for the reader's convenience) from the *Haedritic Manuscripts*,

purported to have been written by someone known only as the Dweller in the Jacinth Chamber. This text is very old indeed, and I believe that there are many more liches in existence today than when the text was written.

... and I was also told during this nether-spanning discussion that [this tanar'ri] (name untranslatable) had decided to take control of a world wherein humans and demi-humans lived together.

[The tanar'ri] first plotted to seed the world with his minions and take the world by force. This proved unsuccessful. Yet intent upon acquiring the world, [the tanar'ri] set about creating minions that were [significantly more powerful] than the troops previously used. It tempted the mages of the world with great power and knowledge, and it gave them instructions on how to transform their bodies, minds, and even [spirits] to a higher form of existence—one that would command [great magic] and allow [the tanar'ri] to assume control of the world with subtlety and plotting.

[This tanar'ri] still lives, as do its higher minions. The world it has tried to conquer is ours, and this is surely the origin of the [lich], explaining how this [pestilence] came to [existence]. What our fates will be if we allow the [liches] to influence us is a truly terrible thought to contemplate. . . .

This fragment suggests the origin of the lich, and I am inclined to believe it. There had to be a first lich, and there had to be someone to formalize a ritual for its creation. That a mortal should gamble with a ritual that must kill it if it does not grant it *unlife* without some sort of guidance seems unlikely.

Considering the many factors, complex in nature, of what is known about the ritual, the odds that someone should get it right by coincidence are ludicrous. Perhaps these instructions came from a fiend from another plane of existence, perhaps not. But this fragment, couched as it is in mythic terms, is still as fair an explanation as I've encountered in my researches of the origin of the first lich.

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How I Obtained the Knowledge

I tell you, there is a malevolence which lurks outside the vision of mortals. It waits patiently, living for millennia, scheming toward a complex series of dark goals which serve only to produce more power for yet more evil goals.

Nothing stops it—nothing except the utter destruction of its body and spirit. If allowed to continue, it will set in motion such plots that mortals could never hope to prevent. Mortals simply cannot live long enough to grasp the designs of this nefarious creature, who seeks to wield ultimate power and claim the throne of the gods for itself, wreaking havoc upon the mortals with whom it once walked.

Read the journal I have sent with this letter, Van Richten, and study it well! I fear I have been compromised and that Mirinalithiar knows I have her journal. If this is so, then you are the only person in all the realms that can give my death meaning!

—From a letter penned by Irithanar Millinius
to Dr. Van Richten

Thus did I come into the possession of the journal of a mage who supposedly died nearly a century ago. The diary of Mirinalithiar chronicles her descent from humanity to lichdom. There are entries beginning almost from the moment she decided to become a lich to the moment she passed over. This has proved to be my most important source of information about the ritual and processes of becoming a lich. Of course, the existence of such a source is suspect in itself, and might be a part of some subtle plan of the forces of evil.

Much of the journal is cryptic, extraneous, or highly empirical, but I will summarize some of the more pertinent data. Mirinalithiar began her quest for lichdom by investigating incidents of mysterious, high-powered magic. She was searching the tell-tale marks of what she surmised to be lich behavior. Mirinalithiar achieved a breakthrough when she happened upon an account of how, at a century-old

battlefield, the dead rose from their graves—weapons, armor, and all—and marched into a nearby range of mountains.

She began to study the history of the area wherein the peculiar events took place, paying particular attention to tales of the mages that lived there and their behavior. She found that the mages were quite powerful, but preferred absolute solitude in comparison to most other mages, who gained power through heroic adventuring. The reclusive wizards defended their abodes from evil or other threats, but only if their keeps or lands were directly in danger.

The startling level of their powers was documented, however. Mirinalithiar found that the mages made occasional trips to magical colleges and guilds. There, they impressed and intimidated the high wizards with their abilities. Most importantly, those mages' studies were invariably concerned with necromancy. All of them were especially interested in spells that allowed communication with the dead and those places where the dead reside.

It was Mirinalithiar's belief that they were seeking information about the processes of becoming a lich, and about methods of contacting some ghost or long-dead spirit or perhaps even that fiend referred to in the *Haedritic Manuscripts*. Mirinalithiar attempted to follow that same path to knowledge, and apparently she succeeded.

Her journal became decreasingly coherent as she went about the business of summoning and speaking with the dead, and it is difficult to reconstruct the facts from her text. Even so, with a great deal of study and the assistance of several scholars, I believe I have discovered the basic formulae for achieving lichdom.

Be warned, you who would use this information for evil intent, that Mirinalithiar was not sane when she recorded these procedures. I offer them only to shed light on the gall and desperation of the wizard who would be immortal. Used in the cause of justice, this knowledge is indeed power; used for evil purpose, this knowledge is certain death!

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The Process

According to Mirinalithiar's journal, once the details of the transformation process are known, the scholar has to practice with rigor the new-found information.

Primary among the requirements is the ability to cast key spells. The spells themselves are rare, and only an wizard of great power and knowledge who fears not to dabble in the horrid art of necromancy can cast them, but this is not a particular hindrance to a knowledge-hungry—nay, knowledge-ravenous—mage. As I have postulated, one cannot acquire great power without already having it. Hence, power is the key, power that begets power, ever corrupting the mage while preparing him to accumulate even more might.

The Phylactery

Once the spellcasting considerations are satisfied, the wizard proceeds to the next, equally important step: the making of a *phylactery*, a vessel that will house his spirit.

The phylactery usually is a small boxlike amulet made of common materials, highly crafted. Lead or any other black or dark-gray colored material is frequently used. Inspection of the amulet may reveal various arcane symbols carved into the interior walls of the box, and those grooves are filled with silver as pure as the mage can find. These amulets are never made of wood, and rarely of steel. Brightly colored metals, such as gold, are infrequently used. (Mirinalithiar's account is extremely unclear, but it may not be the color which is the problem. The relative softness of the material and its subsequent likelihood of being injured may create this restriction.)

Because the mage understandably has no desire for anyone to know what ritual he is undertaking—particularly what the arcane symbols and etchings truly look like—the mage may study and learn how to handle molten metals, and he may well acquire other crafting skills necessary to design and construct the phylactery.

The vessel that becomes a lich's phylactery must be of excellent craftsmanship, requiring an investment of not less than 1,500 gp per level of the mage, with more money needed for custom-shaped amulets. It is, of course, possible to obtain a normal amulet of good craftsmanship without paying for it, but the amulet to be used as a phylactery must be constructed for that specific purpose. The craftsman who builds the amulet need not know, however, of its true intended purpose.

Though the phylactery normally is a box, it can be fashioned into virtually any item, provided that it has an interior surface into which the lich can carve certain small magical designs. Silver is poured into these designs and a *permanency* spell is cast on each.

The designs themselves include arcane symbols of power and the wizard's personal sigil. Should the DM wish to actually illustrate them for the players, he or she should feel free to create unique designs to fit the campaign. The wizard's personal sigil is a mystical sign of personal significance, and identifying it may convey great power over a lich.

Once the box is constructed and the designs are set and enspelled, four spells must be cast upon the phylactery: *enchant an item*, *magic jar*, *permanency*, and *reincarnation*. When all of these spells have been cast, the amulet is suitable for use as a phylactery (by the specific wizard who made it only). The manner in which the spells are cast, and the time at which they are cast is not important, except that the *permanency* must be cast last.

The rules governing the creation of a phylactery are not immutable. A DM can create a wonderful adventure around the creation, or the attempted creation, of a phylactery. The necessity of fine craftsmanship, the ritual casting of powerful spells, the occurrence of a rare astronomical event, and many other factors may come into play in the completion of the device. The DM is encouraged to custom create not only the phylactery, but the process of making it, too.

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The Potion of Transformation

With the phylactery constructed, the mage casts an assortment of spells to properly enchant the box and finally casts his spirit into it. To do so, however, requires the inclusion of the most secret aspect of becoming the lich—the potion of transformation. The ingredients of this potion are unknown to me, and it was only by chance that I even came to know of its existence. Mirinalithiar's journal mentions it but once, as "that foul brew from the heart of evil."

After some consultation and speculation with my scholarly sources, I have concluded that the poisonous venom of a number of rare creatures must be involved, as the potion kills the mortal wizard almost instantly. Of course, after my near-fatal experience with my old friend Shauten, I am sure that another one of the ingredients is the heart of a sentient creature.

In any case, I do know (from Mirinalithiar's journal) that the mage must drink the potion when the moon is full, and if successful, the mage is transformed into a lich. Otherwise, the mage dies immediately. Whether or not the potion is successful, and whether the mage's constitution can handle the effects, is the ultimate test of the mage's skill and knowledge.

To initiate the transformation, to break the link between his body and spirit and forge it anew between his spirit and the phylactery, the mage must drink a special potion that is highly toxic. This potion, if properly made, will cause the mage to immediately transform into a lich. If one small error is made in the formula or the concoction and distillation of the potion, irrevocable death results.

To create the potion, the mage may blend several forms of natural poisons, including arsenic, belladonna, nightshade, heart's worry, and the blood of any of a number of poisonous monsters. Also necessary are a heart, preferably from a sentient creature, and the venom from a number of rare creatures such as wyverns, giant scorpions, and exotic snakes.

When the ingredients are properly mixed, the following spells must be cast upon the potion: *wraithform*, *cone of cold*, *feign death*, *animate dead*, and *permanency*. The potion must be drunk during a night with a full moon. Upon ingestion, a system shock roll is required. If the mage passes the test, then he has been transformed by the potion into a dreaded lich.

If the mage doesn't survive the shock, then he is dead forever, with no hope of *any sort* of resurrection. Not even a *wish* will undo the lethal potion. Only the direct intervention of a deity (or the DM) has any hope of resurrecting a mage killed in this manner.

The Change

The mage's physical form reflects the transformation of his spirit. Where the mage in life might have been beautiful to the eyes, the potion turns his body into something profoundly hideous to behold.

I have recorded a tale of an old man, shrunken and weary of heart, who swears to me he was not born in these lands, but came from a far off place he called Cormyr. He served as a scout in the army of the king of that region, a man he named Azoun. In his youth, he recounted, he served the king in a great and noble battle against the forces of evil in that land, which had swelled unknown like a hidden cancer and were now erupting like a malignant disease upon the surface of the land. As an advance scout, he and two others rode out on fleet-footed ponies toward the enemy forces, to determine their number and position.

He said that his patrol surprised and, in turn, was set upon by a dozen undead skeletons, each armed with archaic armor and weapons from an era and army he didn't recognize. Commanding the troops was an undead wizard. During the encounter, the scout had the misfortune of looking directly at the lich for more than a few seconds.

The skin over its entire body was shrunken and wrinkled over each bony limb. It was as dried as parchment, and rough to the point of

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being able to grind marble into dust.

The sockets of the eyes were the most terrifying to behold. Instead of eyes, it had sunken pits as black as the most evil heart that ever pulsed. As the skirmish wore on, from within the sockets came a harsh reddish glow, two fiery blobs of light that sparkled and illuminated the sockets and the area around the lich.

The scout was wounded and fell to the ground. He looked back at his comrades, and they too had fallen and were being stripped of their gear by the spiritless minions of the lich. Just as he was about to say his final prayer, the lich strode over to him.

The old man swears that, although his elder years have been ones of commonplace fears—of whether the crops would wither of disease or whether his grandchildren would remember to not talk to strangers—that this moment was fear itself. Next to it all the other fears of his life had been mere worries about the weather. That was the most terrible moment

the he had ever undergone. Here are his exact words, as my less-than-nimble fingers wrote them down:

"I looked back at the lich just in time to see it walk toward me. Its wretched gaze never wavered as it stepped onto and over the bodies of my comrades. Its vulgar sockets fixed themselves upon me, and I felt the evil pour upon me like it was water, as if the lich exuded a palpable evil.

"Then it came to stand next to me. Gods and goddesses, I have never felt anything so foul or evil! A terrible cold came over me, the likes of which were worse than the icy blasts of the northern wastes. It numbed me completely, and I started to shiver violently. I was choking—I could not breath for fright.

"My lantern had fallen with me, and my left hand still had a grasp of it. It was still lit. When the lich stopped next to me, and the cold came over me, I looked to the lantern for comfort and warmth—thinking it might be my last sight.

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"I saw then that the light from the lantern had grown dimmer somehow. The flame was of normal size—this I saw plainly through the glass. Yet, the light from the flame had somehow shrunk. From the weakened light of the lantern, I could barely make out my own forearm.

"Suddenly there was a red glow upon me, and my arm grew plainly visible. I realized to my horror that the lich had come even closer to me, and I was seeing my arm by the glow of its diabolical eye sockets.

"Despite my fear, I turned to look at the lich, which had squatted down next to me. I would at least look upon my death. Rotted, stinking robes clung to its skeletal form. It was also wearing some kind of chain of office. I did not recognize the chain, nor the kingdom nor office it represented. I could tell, though, that the lich was some kind of nobility.

"It looked at me for a few seconds, and then smiled. Its ancient muscles pulled its lips apart with a crackling sound. It opened its mouth as if to speak, but no words came forth.

"Bathed as I was in the darkness, the light of its sockets and the numbing cold, I passed out. My last vision was of those terrible piercing eyes, looking directly through me to my very spirit.

"I thank every god of good and purity that the lich never laid its foul hand upon me, and that for some inexplicable reason, I was spared death."

Into Unlife

In order to affect the world, the lich must have a method of interacting with it. This means the spirit of the lich must attach itself to a body. After entering the phylactery, the spirit must remain for at least three days. After those days have passed, the lich may re-enter the body from whence it came. This act of transference is quite demanding upon the host body. Because of this, the lich must rest for a week after re-entering the body. During this week the lich is unable to cast any spells and is unable to undertake any strenuous physical labor. It is only able to exert enough energy to care for itself, and perhaps to read and meditate.

The astute reader will realize that this is an opportune moment to strike down the lich. That is why the preceding information is so invaluable. To know the process is to know the lich's vulnerabilities. An alert person may spot the prospective lich as it pursues its deadly goal, and then be ready to strike when the creature is helpless. Once the week has expired, the lich will never be so helpless again.

When the lich rises, the precise location of the mage's spirit is debatable, but I am inclined to believe that its body is just a shell, a meat puppet with which it works its will upon its surroundings. The phylactery is now what truly contains the essence of the lich. In any case, if the lich's body should "die," then its spirit is already safe within the phylactery. If the spirit is, in fact, *not* already within the phylactery, then this transference is instantaneous, and I believe not subject to distance, magical, or even dimensional restrictions.

As many sources speak of the reappearance of lichens after their documented destruction, presumably, once back in its phylactery, the lich has some method of inhabiting a new body, or creating a new one. This transhabitation is not, however, part of the journals of Mirinalithiar, and so I am left speculating upon this point, and am at a loss as to the truth of it.

Rituals of Sustenance

I propose that the lich does not have the ability to sustain itself over the centuries without some sort of ritualistic practice.

—Harmon Ruscheider, scholar

Dr. Harmon Ruscheider was a classmate and colleague of mine, more gifted in the rigors of empirical research than I. Our friendship was based upon a mutual fascination with biological processes, but his was a desire to advance the capabilities of the medical profession whereas I was more interested in the application of proven practices. Understandably, we drifted apart when our tenures at the University ended.

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Then, a few months after I began my investigation of the lich, he came to me by the dark of night, foolishly traveling during the hours when the dead walk freely; I very nearly refused to allow him entrance into my home, but he frantically convinced me of his identity and good intentions. Dr. Ruscheider was one of the most stoic and controlled men I have ever known, but the blithering person whom I reluctantly admitted to my abode was scarcely the same fellow. The poor man was teetering on the brink of sanity, clutching at the remaining strands of his once-formidable mind with a steadily weakening grasp, dissolving into a lunatic before my eyes.

We talked through the night and well into the following morning, but it was not a nostalgic chat of past loves and classroom exploits. Ruscheider had been a prisoner of an Invidian lich for the prior seven months, and he was desperate to impart his knowledge to me before his faculties left him for good. What I wrote down as my old friend babbled through the night proved to be my most important resource regarding lichs, next to the journal of Mirinalithiar.

It seems that Ruscheider had been studying the necrology of lichs as an extension of some research of his on the post-mortem decomposition of the body. Such analysis inevitably necessitated the observation of a subject, but Ruscheider—equally inevitably—became a subject himself. Fortunately, the lich understood an obsession with knowledge that would lead a man down dangerous paths, and it allowed Ruscheider to live long enough to learn some of its necrology. Even more fortunate, the lich destroyed itself in an unsuccessful *power ritual* (see Chapter V, Lich Magic), and Ruscheider was eventually able to escape the clutches of the lich's suddenly-ungoverned minions.

Harmon Ruscheider's knowledge was dearly bought, and I present it to the reader in his memory. When he had exhausted himself of both strength and information, he died bittersweetly in my arms.

The Ritual

Liches need not partake of food, water, or any of the things we mortals must, but they still must conduct rituals which are designed to renew their powers and sustain their physical existence. When the lich has learned enough to satiate its gluttonous appetite for power, it will abandon its solid form for the exploration of realms beyond mortal comprehension (see Chapter X, the Demilich), but until then it must sustain its body against the ravages of time. This ritual of sustenance is also necessary if the lich is to maintain control over undead servants, cast magical spells, and conduct other rituals (discussed later in this text). Fortunately, the lich undergoes a ritual of sustenance approximately once each century.

The undead wizard begins by acquiring the main ingredient in lich preservation: a fresh heart. Ruscheider's research indicates that the kind of heart—that is, its owner's specie—is not relevant. The only important characteristic is that it must belong to a sentient mortal. Also, it may not have stopped beating for more than three nights. Since the ritual apparently comprises tapping off the life-essence of a sentient being, it is reasonable to conclude that a body freshly killed, or not killed at all, is best for the lich's purposes.

Once the lich has found such a heart (usually by having its undead minions prey on nearby villages or by capturing mortals who pass too close to the lair), it steals the heart. The lich, itself, needs to take the heart from the body, as this act is part of the ritual process.

Once the body, living or dead, is transported to the lich's lair, it undergoes embalming processes and several incantations. My notes from Ruscheider's testimony are rather incomplete regarding what the body is embalmed with, and what spells are cast, but I can say the embalming fluid is highly lethal. Ruscheider claimed that two pints delivered into a small lake will kill all who drink from it. Needless to say, if the victim is not already dead at this point, he soon will be.

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The heart is then removed in a ceremony requiring a few hours to complete. During this time, the lich is completely involved in the ritual and is only able to control a fraction of its minions, due to the great mental and magical efforts directed at the heart and corpse. The corpse, at a latter point in the ritual, is reduced to a husk and is unusable for any other purpose whatsoever.

Once the heart is removed, it is placed in a brazier along with a multitude of arcane and alchemical materials. The heart, made flammable during the ritual, is incinerated. Reacting with the materials in the brazier, a bizarre dust is created which is then sprinkled onto the lich's body and into its eyes.

This is the life-giving dust that the lich needs to survive. Without it, the lich gradually loses magical power, control over its minions, and it begins a slow deterioration until, at last, its body crumbles to dust.

Even if this occurs, the lich still exists, and its spirit returns to its phylactery. Once there, it is apparently able to claim other bodies for its own use. However, for reasons of its own—perhaps vanity, perhaps due to the demands of its peculiar state of existence—the lich definitely prefers to retain its original body.

Connections to the So-Called Negative Material Plane

A not-uncommon theory is that evil is an actual force, rather than a characteristic assigned to behavior. This is a philosophical topic that I must avoid in this text. However, I *will* approach a universal theory of duality, of the so-called Negative and Positive Material planes: Theoretically, there is a positive and negative polarity to the universe. Proceeding from that idea, we may suppose that these polar aspects of the multiverse are woven into the ethereal framework of the physical world.

Sadly, I have come to the conclusion that the lands of my birth have more of the negative

than positive—there is more of evil than of good in this realm. The undead that curse the land: the dread vampire, the walking skeleton, the stupefied zombie, and the hosts of ghosts, ghouls, and assorted evil spirits which run like rivers through our realm are spun of this theoretical negative material. If intelligent undead, like the vampire and the lich, can manipulate this material of which they hypothetically are composed, similarly to the way that scientists manipulate the elements of the positive plane, then this may explain their control over many things evil and undead.

The connection between the lich and the Negative Material plane logically would be forged during the transformation ceremony, most probably at the very moment of death and rebirth into unlife. The period the lich spends in the phylactery most likely creates and reinforces this link between his spirit and the Negative Material. Of course, this discussion remains completely within the realm of the hypothetical, yet it easily explains much of the lich's powers which I shall address in the next chapter: the chilling touch, the black aura, the eyeless sight, and so forth. Perhaps the phylactery is some sort of conduit to or pocket of that Negative Material plane, wherein the lich may roam and familiarize itself with the rank eddies and flows of power of that foul plane and the methods of manipulating them.

In spite of its easily disputable existence, I fear that I shall often lean upon the crutch of the Negative Material plane as I attempt to uncover the facts about liches. In the absence of hard data, the scientist must rely upon supposition, yet it is a valid approach if it leads to practical, usable results, and that is the entire goal of my *Guide to the Lich*.

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Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

—Lord Acton

Know that the planes are filled with all manner of strange creatures, each one unique. This applies to creatures of magic most especially. While they are often of the same ilk, they are also clearly different from one another—different in creation, purpose, desires, and potency.

Realize this and know that no two supernatural beings are alike, and that one cannot wholly predict their actions.

Look instead upon each being individually, and make your predictions for the behavior of that one.

—From *The Gnomics of Bilerius*

The logic of Bilerius's passage above may seem obvious or trite, but I have lost too many comrades to the assumption that "they're all alike." *Never make this mistake!* While the skills and powers of a given creature may be shared by most or all of its breed, the most powerful of the supernatural remain ever unpredictable, ever singular.

With the lich this is particularly true, for their province is the arcane, a subject of apparently unlimited scope, and each lich is as unique as the power it pursues. Legends proliferate with theories about what is gained by becoming a lich. Some locales have folk songs about liches becoming ghostly skeletons whose bones are as strong as steel, while others tell of spells powerful enough to reduce mountains to dust. Yet another tale promises that standing water freezes when a lich is nearby, even in the height of summer. These songs exaggerate the reality of lichdom, but only slightly so.

The research that led to my *Guide to Vampires* was greatly aided by the fact that vampires are notoriously egotistical creatures. In hindsight, I realize that much valuable

information regarding the extermination of these monsters came from the monsters, themselves, anxious to tell their own stories.

Unfortunately, the lich is not so eager to justify its existence as is the vampire. Holding a lich at bay has not been achieved and a straightforward interview is, of course, out of the question! I'm afraid that the only way to learn about the lich is through direct observation and careful conjecture. Second-hand information is occasionally helpful, but remains suspect at best.

I believe, based on my experience with the undead in general, that liches are intimately connected with that dimension of negative energy, the Negative Material plane. It is from this *un-plane* that the vampire draws its unholy powers, and I suspect that the lich shares this source. Several of the lich's native abilities are otherwise simply unexplainable. Those investigative scientists who follow in my footsteps would be wise to continually doubt this hypothesis, however. Otherwise, any immediately unanswerable question may be foolishly attributed to the powers of this merely theoretical place.

Whatever the actual source of the lich's faculties, the manifestation of that power is quite observable. In this chapter, therefore, I shall address the various powers of the *common* lich (if any lich can be referred to as "common"), and also to a number of abilities that I have encountered in my research, constituting an *uncommon* lich.

Lich Sight

There is little that can escape the eyes of a lich. I recall waiting in ambush for a lich in a cell deep underground, without a source of light for thousands of yards (we had thoroughly cloaked our own). I was immersed in a blackness so deep that I could almost feel it, and only shadow-sparks swam before my mind's eye to remind me that light had ever existed.

After a long wait, the deliberate, unearthly

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shuffle of the lich eased through the thick darkness and signalled the monster's approach. We held our breaths in absolute silence and waited as the red pin flares of the lich's eyes came into view.

It entered the cell, advanced until it stood nearly between our positions on opposite walls, and stopped abruptly. Then, with an eeriness that makes my skin crawl even to think of it, the lich turned its gaze, first to one side and then the other, and looked upon our party as if we stood in full light of day! Thus were we betrayed by our own trap, for we were the only blind ones in the room! The lesson we learned is that darkness is not your friend when dealing with a lich.

But neither is light your ally against the undead wizard. The lich is not intimidated in the least by sunlight, nor is it blinded.

I surmise that the visual spectrum of the lich is not dependant upon light waves. Rather, its connection with negative energy allows it to somehow perceive the very presence and location of material objects and beings, situated in a dimension physically and diametrically opposed to its own frame of reference.

A lich can see with normal vision in even the darkest of environments, but it remains unaffected by even the brightest of light.

The Black Aura

My painstaking research has detailed many lethal attributes to liches. A certain subset of those attributes are often repeated among my texts, and they seem to point to a core feature of the common lich: an *aura* of fear, darkness, and cold.

Fear

It is thoroughly understandable that anyone coming face to face with an undead wizard of enormous power would react with direct and abject fear. Although I am not a great warrior or

a powerful wizard, I have seen much of that which lives by the dark of night and terrorizes the living; I have become much inured to sights of the most ghastly nature. Nevertheless, there are certain monsters that I will always view with unreasoning terror, and the lich is one of them.

However, the black aura of the lich is not a thing that can be faced down with sheer courage. Even the most stalwart hero will instinctively flee in terror from the presence of a lich. Fear precedes the lich like the stench of its minions. Though some brave souls may withstand its demoralizing effect, none can deny the cold grip on their heart when the lich appears on the scene. Whatever the cause of the fear, magic or otherwise, the fact remains that those who come near enough to a lich to know its nature by sight will almost always flee in terror.

It is important to note, however, that this only occurs if the lich is revealed for what it is. Liches who utilize illusion or magical items to appear as normal mages or clerics or some other being do not automatically cause this reaction. It is therefore all the more powerful when they are discovered.

Any creature of fewer than 5 Hit Dice (or levels of experience) who looks upon a lich must roll a successful saving throw vs. spell or flee in terror for 5d4 rounds. The effect tends to descend upon the victim rather than strike him (as would the effect of a *fear* spell), so the chance to drop held items is optional.

Note that the viewer must see the lich in its true form in order for the effect to manifest; a lich disguised with an illusion would not evoke fear unless the disguise was a frightening one.

Cold Darkness

It is the experience of all who make contact with a lich that this aura of fear also manifests itself in cold and darkness. Sources conflict as to the nature of this. Some say that the darkness is an actual physical emission, similar to a spell of *darkness*, which coincidentally

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causes fear because it evokes the frequent dread of darkness in humans and humanoids. Accepting this premise, the cold would be spell-like in nature, too. I disagree.

Others theorize, and I side with them, that the cold and darkness are a physical manifestation of the magical icy darkness of the creature's being, and its aura of alien and horrifying power causes fear in all who draw near to it. As with vampires, this phenomenon may be attributable to that theoretical connection between liches and the plane of negative energy, and the cold and darkness might simply be a cloud of that extraneous negative energy. As such, the aura does not exist as a physical absence of heat and light, but rather is a field of malignant power that viewers perceive as frosty darkness in their attempts to grasp its true nature.

The cold darkness of the lich's aura is created purely for dramatic effect and should be so used for the DM's convenience. The area of effect may shift freely to prevent players from using the aura as a homing device or other source of information. However, some DMs may wish to treat the aura as quasi-magical, creating a modified form of the *blur* spell, for example. Other vision-and temperature-oriented spells may be similarly used for the DM's purposes.

The Chilling Touch

Never was there a creature which more ironically turned on its head the homily, "Cold hands, warm heart." Woe to the person who is grasped by the lich! Its touch will freeze the skin of anything as would the coldest arctic ice. For a living person, this can mean severe pain and epidermal damage. Furthermore, the pitiable creature so touched may be chilled literally to the bone, becoming completely immobile until aided by magical or priestly powers. In several texts there are accounts of death caused by the icy touch of the lich.

What is the cause of this chill touch? It is

possible that it is, after a fashion, a curse of the gods of Goodness upon the lich for betraying its mortality. Since the lich has willingly thrown over all that is warm and kind and human in order to pursue with cold dispassion the acquisition of power, the gods may have punished the undead wizard by making its touch a reflection of its inner, cold-hearted nature.

Others maintain that the lich's icy touch is simply the cold of the grave, amplified by a score of magnitudes during the ritual that transforms the lich from living being to walking dead. Being a man of learning and of the medical sciences, I am sure that this is not truth. Dead beings are only cold in relationship to their living counterparts and are, in fact, simply the same temperature as their surroundings. What amplification of room temperature could result in a cold that could cause a man's skin to stick to the lich's bony claw and peel from his arm like the skin of a blanched tomato? No, this theory is flawed. Numerous wizards have confirmed that both common and essential components used in the casting of spells would be ruined or rendered inert by freezing, yet I have found no evidence of any lich keeping his components warm. I have also inspected numerous objects for signs of contact with significant coldness after they had been handled by a lich, but found nothing to suggest that they were affected by the black aura. It is apparent, then, that this chill touch is a selective ability of the lich, rather than a physical characteristic of living death.

Once again, it may be put forth that the icy touch is a manifestation of the twisted link between that hypothetical plane of negative energy and the lich. In that case, the energy-sapping nature of that place leeches the very heat from the air through the lich, which stands as some sort of mobile portal to that domain. Or, possibly, the physical contradiction of positive and negative energies coming into contact may cause damage to living tissues.

Whatever the case, I must remind the reader that I am not versed in planar theory, and I cannot confirm the existence of a plane of

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negative energy. However, the existence of such a place or thing certainly explains much.

Should a lich touch a living creature, that creature immediately suffers 1d10 points of cold damage. The victim then must roll a successful saving throw vs. paralysis or be suddenly and completely unable to move. The paralysis lasts until magically dispelled.

Weapon Immunities

As with many undead things, unenchanted weapons inflict no damage upon the lich. If that weren't enough, it takes a sword of considerable experience to find the soft spots and "make them bleed," so to speak. The density of the magical energy concentrated within a lich's being is so great that it takes a weapon of magic, itself, and a well-trained arm to harm one. This is not to say that unenchanted weapons and inexperienced warriors do not strike the lich's form; rather, the weapons appear to halt and skid off as if they had made contact with a stone too dense to scratch. I recall one instance in which a rambunctious young blade of some renown struck the skeletal form of a lich between the two bones of its forearm (which were open to the air due to its advanced decay). With an idle twist, the lich gestured with its arm and broke the youth's blade in two!

Liches can be hit only by weapons of at least +1 enchantment, by magical spells, or by creatures with at least 6 Hit Dice (or levels of experience) or magical properties.

Additional Protection

This need for magic to damage the lich's form extends in a dual fashion into certain immunities in the lich. However, from what I have read, I do *not* believe that the lich is immune to the effects of sorcery, except for magicks that are designed to induce a condition based in the biological nature of a

living being. A spell cast to impart insanity on the target is one example. Such spells have no effect, as the lich's mind works in such an arcane, twisted manner that "sanity" has no practical meaning. *Death* spells are also ineffective, regardless, it seems, of who casts them. Likewise, spells of *sleep* and *enfeeblement* have no effect. And the lich's mighty and inhumanly transformed intellect makes the use of *charm* magic upon it utterly futile. As *cold* and *electricity* also commonly depend upon a living biological state for the majority of the damage that they cause, the dead flesh of the lich, combined with its ensorcelled toughness, renders these damaging magicks useless against it also. Finally, the lich seems to be unaffected by *polymorph* magic. Apparently the lich's intimate connection with negative energy confounds the workings of a positive-material affecting spell.

I hasten to add that, for all these many immunities, the creature is still vulnerable to a plethora of magicks, and indeed, magical attack from a distance remains one of the best offenses against these beings.

There also are priests who have presented their holy symbols with such faith and authority that the lich has (at least temporarily) fled the scene, but these were mighty clerics indeed. I hesitate to mention that it is possible to turn a lich back through the priestly virtues, for I have lost several holy friends who miscalculated the power of their adversary. Nevertheless, lichs are certainly undead creatures, and as such they are vulnerable to the bane of the undead: righteous faith and the power of the gods.

The magical nature of the lich and its undead state make it utterly immune to *charm*, *sleep*, *enfeeblement*, *polymorph*, *cold*, *electricity*, *insanity*, or *death* spells.

Priests of at least 8th level may attempt to turn a lich, as may paladins of no less than 10th level.

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Spells and Spellcasting

Of course, one important skill that a mage does not lose when he transforms into a lich is the ability to cast spells. But to my surprise, I found that the lich remains under the same basic restrictions as living mages when casting spells. For example, the lich still has to keep its spells recorded in a spell book, and it still has to go through the rituals of spellcasting.

One aspect of spellcasting that *does* change upon the transformation of a living wizard into a lich is the need for sleep—liches never need it. However, they do need to spend an equivalent time to a normal mage's rest in a light sort of meditative trance in order to be able to re-impress upon their minds the magical words and energies that compose spells. However, whereas the typical mortal mage must have a certain period of *uninterrupted* rest, the lich does not. (After all, being undead, the lich can never rest as does a mortal.) Once it has spent the total needed amount of time in meditation upon the unseen configurations of the threads of magic, it can consult its spell books and rememorize its spells no matter how many times it has been interrupted. (Practically, I would suppose that these segments of meditative time cannot be fragmented into spans of less than a quarter of an hour each to be of any use). This light meditative trance would account for the many descriptions of liches as being "brooding" and "lost in arcane thought." But any foolish man who thinks a meditating lich is unaware of his surroundings is bound for but a short time in this life.

This piece of information is useful inasmuch as it serves for a warning: a party of lich hunters cannot interrupt a lich's rest and thus deprive it of its ability to learn spells. Much more likely the lich will dispense with the party and then continue from whence it left off.

The lich's undead, evil nature grants it particular expertise when casting necromantic spells. The lich is a dealer of death (and a dealer with death), and it has many spells and

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abilities available to it for this nefarious use. In general, it is agreed upon in authoritative sources like the *Journal of Moritavius Jovanovitch* and the scholarly *Divers [sic] Meditations Upon the Higher Magicks* that liches tend to be able to wield necromantic magic with at least twice the effectiveness of living mages. While there can be no question that liches are adept at the use of necromantic magic, I attribute their general potency to their vast experience and the time they spend developing their talents, rather than their special, undead natures.

Liches do not require uninterrupted rest or study time in order to learn spells. The amount of time required to memorize a full complement of lich spells is equal to the number of available spell levels times 10 rounds. For example, if a lich wishes to memorize one 1st-level spell, one 3rd-level spell, one 4th-level spell, and two 5th-level spells, he would need $(18 \text{ [spell levels]} \times 10 =) 180$ rounds, or three hours. If the lich is interrupted after the first hour, but casts no further spells, then it need only meditate for two more hours to complete its task.

Liches perform in all respects as a specialist wizard of the necromantic school, with the following exceptions: They suffer no penalties when learning spells from other schools, and they are not prohibited from employing spells of the opposite school (illusion). To the contrary, liches are quite adept at casting illusionary magic.

Control Over Undead

One of the most commonly invoked powers of the lich is its ability to control a variety of undead creatures. The lich is able to command a number of undead to protect it. The number of undead it can control at one time depends largely upon the mental abilities of the lich. Generally, the more intelligent the lich, the more undead it can control. However, I have rarely heard of a lich being able to control

more than a score of undead at once.

There are known to be magical devices that some liches have constructed which allow them to control many more undead creatures than they presumably could normally. These often resemble necklaces or amulets, and are frequently carved with mystical signs of dire import.

If one is pursuing a lich and encounters a band of undead that are protecting it, one can only assume that there are more of them over the next hill. The distance from which the lich can command these undead soldiers seems to be without limit. I have even read a tale of a lich that instructed a ghoul to travel to another lich and to fulfill a task, and the lich was able to see through the undead creature's eyes and into the far distance land to more closely direct the ghoul in its task.

Many types of undead can be commanded by a lich. Essentially, it can command any undead creature that is less powerful than itself. This includes skeletons (probably the most popular minion among liches), ghouls, zombies, shadows, and the like. A distinguishing characteristic of a lich minion is that its eyes will bear the same fiery gaze as the commanding lich, but the minion will not possess any of the lich's powers or auras. The minion completely loses all form of independent thought. In fact, the will of the lich inundates the undead creature totally, so that the lich alone is able to control it. Should the lich die, then all who obey it simply fall to the ground dead, or so I would hope.

This ability to control the undead seems to be a natural part of lichdom. They are able to raise skeletons from the ground with great ease and on some occasions are able to raise corpses without even visiting the grave. Animated corpses are only able to perform physical actions—they are unable to perform any task which requires sentience or even a degree of mental thought. However, since the lich is able to use the corpse's senses when it desires to do so, freshly dead corpses are preferred by liches to be used as minions.

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Whether or not several of the physical senses can be used depends on the condition of the minion's sensory organs. Eardrums, for example, are still usable after the lich animates the corpse, as is the sense of touch as long as the skin is relatively intact. As these components begin to decay, the lich becomes less able to distinguish the surroundings of the minion. However, the lich is *always* able to see through the minion's eye sockets with the same degree and clarity as if the minion's eyes were still healthy and intact.

This ability to use the corpse's senses is a very useful one to the lich. With it, the lich can use the minion to perform almost any sort of physical action that the lich could, itself, including reading texts and preparing alchemical solutions or traps.

A lich is able to attempt to control any form of undead with half (round up) or less of the lich's Hit Dice. For example, a newly-formed lich has at least 11 Hit Dice, so it will have immediate potential dominion over wraiths and lesser undead. To assume control, the undead creature must be within the lich's range of influence, which is equal to the lich's Hit Dice times 1,000 feet. In other words, a typical lich will be able to raise and command undead more than two miles away.

Once a corpse or undead creature is within the lich's range, the lich asserts control by conducting a mystical attack, during which the lich mentally imposes its will upon the victim. This attack will automatically succeed against undead that have (or had in life) 3 Hit Dice or less. Those with more than 3 Hit Dice can make a saving throw vs. spell to avoid being controlled. The lich is free to repeatedly impose its will upon undead that have made their saving throws until they succumb to its influence or escape its range of influence.

The lich can control a number of minions with total Hit Dice equal to three times its Intelligence score. There is no limit to how many of any particular kind of corpse or undead that the lich can control, only to the

raw number of possible minions.

It is possible for a minion to be controlled outside the lich's normal control range. Once every 24 hours, the lich can command one of its minions to perform a task, placing the minion under an effect similar to the 6th-level wizard spell *geas*. The minion will perform that action no matter how long it takes or how great a distance is needed to travel to reach the goal.

The actions assigned to a typical minion must be simple and not contain more than four steps. An example command might be: "Go west until you find a castle; kill the red-haired guard at the drawbridge gate; take his gold amulet; return here." Only one adjective may be used with each step in the quest.

Of course, intelligent undead can understand and act upon more complex orders. Such creatures can even be ordered to take command of the lich's legions on the front line of a battlefield or to lead a reconnaissance team on a mission.

The minion, whatever its level of intelligence, will not stop in its pursuit of the quest. It will become single-minded in its pursuit and will never stop until its assignment is complete or until willed to do so by the lich.

The lich's quest-controlled undead can still be turned, but turning them only has the effect of making them stand still. When no longer subject to being turned (such as out of the radius of effect of the turning cleric or paladin), it will continue on its way. The minion will ignore all distractions during its quest, but will instinctively avoid villages, campsites, fire, and other creatures.

The minion will attempt to overcome any obstacle. If it is physically unable to, it will return automatically to the lich. Once a minion has returned for such a reason, the undead will communicate its difficulties to the lich telepathically.

Once a minion leaves the lich's radius of control, its senses cannot be used by the lich.

The number of minions the lich can assign to a quest is equal to its Intelligence score.

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Retained Abilities

The lich, despite its incredible transformation from mortality, in all probability retains most or all of the nonmage skills it had as a living creature. This was confirmed for me in Barovia, when I hunted for a lich that had taken up residence in the Southern Balinok Mountains. The appearance of the lich, which called itself Crimson Arcanus, coincided with the disappearance of a somewhat well known and very powerful Falkovnian mage called Antirius the Red. Aside from his magical powers, Antirius was locally known for his ability to throw two darts simultaneously, one from each hand. Later, when we first confronted the Crimson Arcanus and forced it to employ combat techniques against us before fleeing, it committed the error of using that ambidextrous dart toss. Sadly, that poison-coated trademark cost the life of my dear comrade Nadin the ranger, but it reminded me of a story about Antirius which I had heard but once, in a tavern in Falkovnia.

I journeyed to Falkovnia and learned anything that I could about the apparently deceased Antirius the Red. The key fact proved to be a relatively trivial one: he was fond of dancing in his earlier years.

Returning to Barovia with a mercenary who combined sword fighting with dance techniques, we sought out the Crimson Arcanus and forced it into another hand-to-hand melee, introducing the mercenary fighter at a crucial moment. To our lasting delight, the lich counter-stepped to the mercenary's moves with an arrogant grace! Its identity thus exposed, we were able use our knowledge of Antirius the Red to defeat the Crimson Arcanus, and locate and destroy its phylactery.

It was remarkable to me that a lich should possess such a high level of dexterity, despite its heavily withered state, but the important fact that I learned was that the lich had not lost those skills that it had in life.

I think it reasonable to conclude that if

abilities requiring dexterity are retained, then all former-life skills of the lich may be retained. This includes thieving and weapon skills, as well as psionic and spellcasting knowledge. It is also reasonable to assume that these skills can continue to be honed until they are far superior to those of any mortal. In fact, any skills the lich had before transformation most likely carry over to a high degree and are an essential part of the lich's knowledge and ability. These skills can be perfected by the lich since it is continuing its study of them.

In further support of this theory, it seems logical that physical skills (such as carpentry, sword fighting, swimming, etc.) that the lich learns after its transformation cannot be learned to the same degree of perfection since the lich's physical body is undead and will not respond to physical training as well as a living, nimble body. On the other hand, if the lich does not require the same amount of rest and sleep that the living do, it may accelerate its learning of physical skills compared to when it was living.

Assuming that my chain of logic is sound, any mental skill such as navigation or alchemy probably can be learned to perfection after the change, since the lich's mind does not deteriorate as does its body. As it is impossible to ask a lich what activities it has taken up since becoming undead, I have no means of confirming this. Even so, it is better to give the lich too much credit than not enough!

The DM should assign nonweapon proficiencies appropriate to the campaign, but he should keep in mind that a lich that has been in existence for more than a few years will have plenty of time to develop an assortment of near-perfect skills.

It would also be reasonable to award a lich all weapon proficiencies allowable to its former class, and even to allow it some proficiencies that are not normally used by members its former class. After all, the lich has virtually an eternity to study any skill that it wishes to acquire.

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Salient Abilities

From some sketchy commentary and glosses drawn from sundry sources, it is apparent that some particular lichs are also able to cast necromantic spells that are not commonly available to the living mage. Whether these are spells of the lich's own devising, drawn from further research, or special abilities of a spell-like nature that these lichs possess, I am once again forced to speculate. Even living mages do not commonly reveal the extent of their spell-weaving knowledge to those not of the magical brotherhood; what is a common spell and what is a personal piece of sorcery is not a topic upon which I can venture to guess. Nevertheless, I have been a witness to many strange and terrible powers engendered by several lichs, and I shall speak briefly of some of them here.

Considering their undead state, it should come as no surprise that a lich would be a craftsman in bone. In Valachan I encountered a lich who had created an entire laboratory made of humanoid bone! At the first I thought the monster had commissioned some dark craftsman, but when my hunting party attacked the lich in a graveyard, it suddenly erected a protective wall of bone around it. To see humanoid bones emerge from the ground all around us was quite alarming, but to watch them bend and meld together was positively horrifying!

The lich's affinity for creating and controlling undead should be self-evident to anyone who has had any dealings with these monsters, but few suspect the depths to which they have honed that accomplishment. I know of one particular lich (that to this day has confounded and eluded me!) that is able to animate the dead with disconcerting ease. In our last confrontation, the lich sent a veritable army of undead creatures toward us. Where they all came from we knew not, but they arrived in droves and in seemingly endless numbers.

Fortunately, we were prepared for a

large-scale battle and we cut down the lich's forces with alacrity. To our shock and horror, the lich moved about the battlefield with some magically enhanced speed, reanimating the bodies we had laid to rest with a simple touch of its bony claw. Thus, we found ourselves facing and fighting the same undead beasts again and again and again, until we were forced to retreat.

I have learned of a particularly cruel lich from one of its pitiable victims: the monster had mastered a technique of entering the dreams of its enemies. Night after night it haunted the poor fellow, preventing him from resting until he sickened and went mad. No spell or prayer was able to shield his mind from the lich's mental onslaught. Sadly, I have heard that he became a murderous lunatic, was hanged by his people, and now he serves the lich as an undead thing. Most distressing!

Still another lich of which I have heard is apparently able to capture the residual magic from other casters' spells and recreate the same effect under its control. One survivor of an encounter with this particular lich told me that a wizard in her party cast a sizable fireball at the lich, who suffered considerable damage from the spell. However, the flames of the fireball did not dissipate, but rather withdrew into the lich's hand as if a vacuum in its palm had drawn them there. Then the lich sent the very same fireball back into the face of the unfortunate wizard. The witness assures me that she saw no casting or use of any item on the part of the lich. Instead, it seems that the lich merely took hold of the casted dweomer and re-energized it!

The sheer scope of possibility dictates that there may be countless salient abilities available to the lich. Being virtually immortal, these wizards have an eternity to develop spells and powers beyond our imagination. Some lichs generate unique and bizarre talents. Other lichs are simply more powerful than the usual, requiring evermore powerful magical weapons to hit them, having the capability of casting more of their deadly magic than usual,

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and so forth. A so-called "common" lich is incredibly powerful, but these "uncommon" liches seem nearly indestructible! There are few ways to challenge them, power versus power.

The best hope of the lich hunter is to *understand* the lich. While each lich—nay, every creature that walks the land—has its strengths, so does it have its weaknesses. Once again, as the lich itself might point out, *knowledge is the greatest power*. Know your enemy and you may live to defeat it.

If the DM wishes to determine salient abilities randomly, the following procedure can be used: For liches that have an Intelligence of 19, roll 1d3 to determine the number of abilities of the lich. If the lich has an Intelligence of 20 or more, roll 1d3 + 1. Then roll 1d20 and consult the table below. Note that each of these powers are innate abilities that the lich can invoke at will. Even though some of the abilities resemble spells, no rituals or components are required to activate the ability.

Lich Abilities Table

d20 Lich Ability

- | | |
|----|-----------------------|
| 1 | Bone command |
| 2 | Chilling wind |
| 3 | Coldfire |
| 4 | Improved defense |
| 5 | Animate dead by touch |
| 6 | Dream manipulation |
| 7 | Doom gaze |
| 8 | Fool's feast |
| 9 | Grasp of death |
| 10 | Grasp of enfeeblement |
| 11 | Control undead legion |
| 12 | Painwrack |
| 13 | Imitation |
| 14 | Polymorph |
| 15 | Regeneration |
| 16 | Skull scry |
| 17 | Vortex of evil |
| 18 | Voice of maleficence |
| 19 | Ignore metal |
| 20 | Improved spellcasting |

Ideally, the DM will custom design a lich especially for his or her own campaign. Salient abilities are created to challenge high-level parties and to create surprises for those gamers who make a habit of studying the *Monstrous Compendium* and "DM-only" text.

Bone Command

The lich is able animate bone and shape it at his will. With this ability he can call up splinters of bones from anywhere bones are present and animate them into a protective barrier similar to the priest spell *blade barrier*, except the damage inflicted is 10d8.

The lich may also form bones into any structure it desires—the only limit is the amount of bones available to the lich. Structures created in this manner are only as strong as the bones used (and some creatures may have very strong bones). The DM should determine the structure's integrity based on the campaign and scenario, the type and amount of bones available, and the resistance the bones offer. Generally, a *bend bars/lift gates* roll is sufficient to breach a bone wall. Inflicting 25 points of damage creates a human-sized hole.

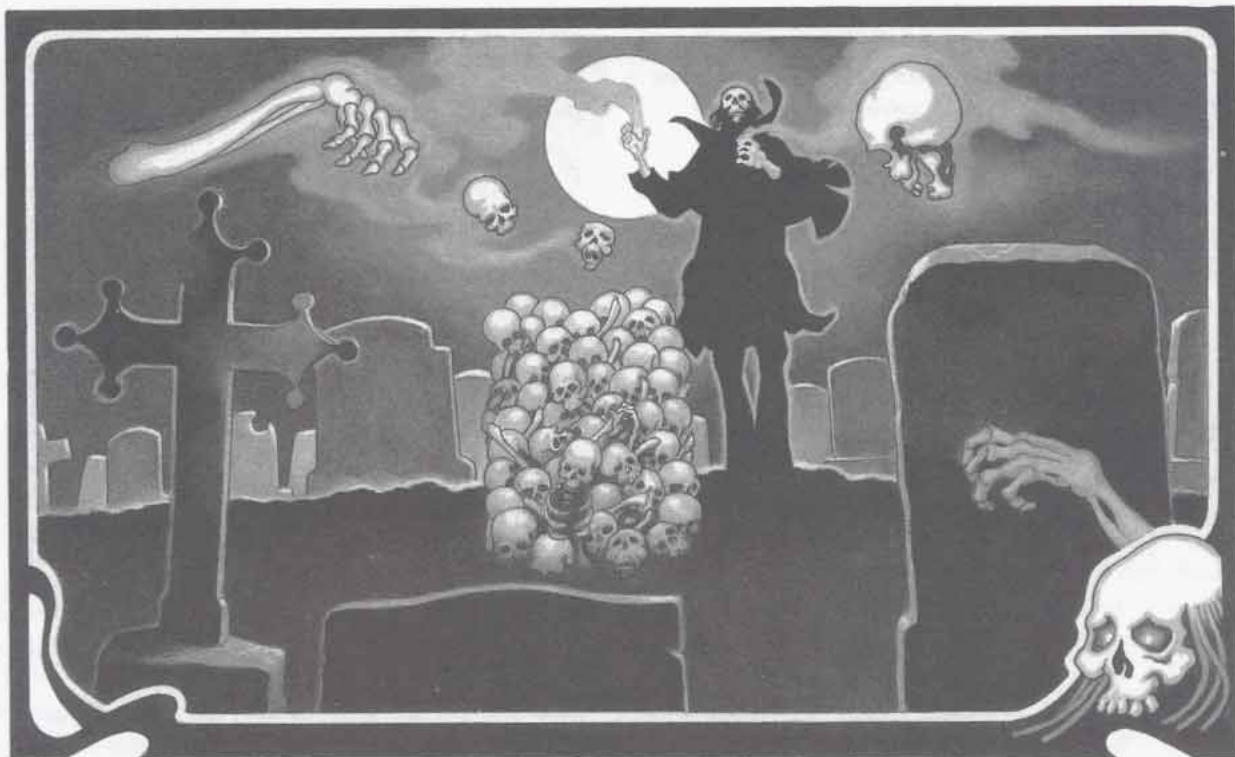
Note that any structure, including huts, arches, bridges, etc., can be created. The structure will exist until it is destroyed or until the lich commands it to disintegrate into its component parts. Structures created in this way cannot simply be dispelled magically, as the bones are actually melded into one another to make a solid mass.

Chilling Wind

The lich is able to blow a freezing blast of wind in a cone 100 feet long and 50 feet wide at the base. The wind is short, lasting for only one round, but during that round a howling, screeching wail accompanies it which requires a fear check for anyone within 60 feet of the cone. Note that characters within the area of effect of *silence*, *15' radius* and similar spells do not need to check.

The wind also freezes standing liquid and chills bottled liquids. Anyone caught within the

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cone of the wind suffers 1d10 points of cold damage. Note that any magical item designed to warm or otherwise protect a character from cold (magical or otherwise) will negate this damage, but the fear check still applies.

Coldfire

The lich is able to produce a negative energy fire which burns so cold that it inflicts 3d10 points of freezing damage upon anything it touches. Being of Negative plane energy, even objects or creatures that are by their nature immune to cold will suffer damage. Also, the *coldfire* penetrates the protection offered by magical objects that are designed to prevent cold damage (such as a *ring of warmth*) if the owner fails a saving throw vs. death magic.

The lich may produce the *coldfire* as a glowing, bluish-green flame that can be thrown as a missile weapon, or it can place the fire inside any skull or skull half. Flames placed

within a skull will last for 30 days unless a *permanency* spell is cast upon the flames. Anyone who touches the skull will suffer damage.

A *dispel magic* spell will extinguish the flame.

Improved Defense

The lich may be hit only by weapons of +2 enchantment or better, or by creatures with 10 or more Hit Dice/levels or magical properties.

Animate Dead by Touch

The lich is able to cause zombies and skeletons to rise with a mere touch. Such creatures only can be turned as the lich who raised them, as long as the lich is within 200 feet of them. The lich may raise as many creatures as are available. All undead created in this fashion will rise as 2 Hit Die creatures that will behave as common zombies and skeletons, excepting the conditions noted above.

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Dream Manipulation

The lich, if it knows the exact location of a living person, can infiltrate that person's mind and manipulate his dreams, turning them into nightmares of the lich's design.

Pervading the dream is the face and gaze of the lich. The receiver of the manipulation, including those with psionic abilities, will be aware that his dreams were tampered with, but he will remain unable to prevent the nightmares. This is a mystical, rather than mentally-oriented, phenomena.

Sleepers affected by *dream manipulation* will awaken having suffered any damage incurred during the nightmare (DMs may role-play a nightmare or simply assess 3d10 points of damage upon the character). Furthermore, the affected character must make a horror check upon awakening. Aside from the usual effects of failing a check, the character will be unable to sleep peacefully for 1d4 nights. During this period of insomnia, no hit points are restored, the character's THACO drops by 1 per day, thief abilities drop by 5 percentage points per day, and no spellcaster may memorize any 3rd-level or higher spell.

Dream manipulation is not possible if the intended target is sleeping in holy ground such as a church or even a graveyard. The range of this ability is equal to the lich's Intelligence score in miles.

Doom Gaze

The lich is able to cause the instant death of a living person just by looking at him. The lich is successful if the character fails a saving throw vs. death magic. The victim may be resurrected, but only by a good cleric and not by potions or magical items.

Fool's Feast

By merely passing within 3 feet of openly displayed food, the lich is able to taint the edibles with a deadly, mystical poison. Those who eat of the food will die within a number of rounds equal to their Constitution score unless they roll a successful saving throw vs. spell.

The food will give off a magical aura if a *detect magic* spell is cast, and the effects of the mystical taint can be negated with a *dispel magic* or *purify food and water* spell.

The food to be tainted must be out in the open, such as a vegetable stand or a buffet. Victims will suffer for only a few minutes before death. A poisoned victim can be cured if he is *healed* by a cleric, if a *neutralize poison* or *wish* spell is cast, or a potion is used.

Grasp of Death

If the lich touches a living person, he will die instantly unless he successfully saves vs. death. The person can be resurrected, but only by a good priest and not by potions or magical items. The lich must selectively use this power. When it is active, a nimbus of coruscating black flame surrounds its hands.

Grasp of Enfeeblement

When the lich touches a living person, 1d10 Strength points are lost for one hour. If the lich reduces a character's Strength to 1 in this manner, the character is paralyzed until six turns have passed, at which time full strength is restored. If the character's Strength is reduced to 0 or less, the character dies.

The lich cannot reduce a character's Strength two or more consecutive times with this ability, i.e., the grasp does not have a cumulative effect. However, the moment that a character's strength returns to him, he is once again vulnerable to the *grasp of enfeeblement*.

Control Undead Legion

The lich is able to control his Intelligence score times 10 Hit Dice worth of undead creatures. All undead of 8 Hit Dice or less are automatically controlled while those of 9 Hit Dice or more are immune to this special power. All undead involved must already be animated.

The range of this ability is equal to the lich's Intelligence score times 1,000 feet. The undead will respond to a limited form of telepathic command which allows the lich to either summon the monsters or direct them toward

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the target or characters to be attacked. Specific commands are not possible—the legion will simply attack anything in the area to which they have been directed. Undead within hearing range of the lich may be commanded vocally, responding to more specific instructions.

Painwrack

The lich is able to project almost numbing pain through its eyes. Any living creature that makes eye contact with the lich suffers 2d10 points of damage from severe pain unless a successful save vs. spell is made.

Imitation

The lich is able to harness the spell energies expended by other wizards and recreate the effect under its control. Any spell cast in the presence of the lich may be recast by the lich in the round immediately following without the expenditure of any of the lich's carried spells.

For example, a 7th-level mage casts a fireball at a lich. The lich makes its normal saving throw and suffers damage accordingly, but it also captures the magical energy, reshapes it into another 7th-level *fireball* spell, and sends it back at the attacking party. The lich need not either know or carry the spell in order to imitate it. Note that the lich must perform the *imitation* in the round immediately following the spell effect or the magical energies dissipate and are lost.

Meta-Polymorph

This works as the 4th-level wizard spell *polymorph self*, with the exception that the lich can perform this as an ability and not a spell. Also, if the lich takes the form of an undead creature, it assumes the undead creature's abilities (excluding saving throws) as well. For example, if a lich were to *meta-polymorph* into a wight, it would assume the wight's ability to drain levels. The single exception is that of a vampire: a lich can *meta-polymorph* into the form of a vampire, but does not gain any of a vampire's abilities. The acquired abilities last only while the lich is changed.

No matter what form the lich polymorphs into by using this ability, the form will have the lich's same fiery red gaze. Of course, the lich can supersede this with the casting of a magical illusion.

Regeneration

The lich is able to regenerate 5 hit points per round. This ability will continue to operate regardless of circumstances or surroundings. This lich's body is even able to regenerate after being reduced to ashes. If such ashes are scattered, it will take the lich one month to regenerate completely for every 10' area over which the ashes are scattered.

If the lich's phylactery is found and destroyed before the body can reform, then the ability to regenerate is neutralized and the lich dies.

Skull Scry

The lich is able to see and hear activity through any skull. The skull must not be attached to a spine, nor can the skull be animated. The lich is able to see through skulls that are up to ten times the lich's Intelligence score in miles away.

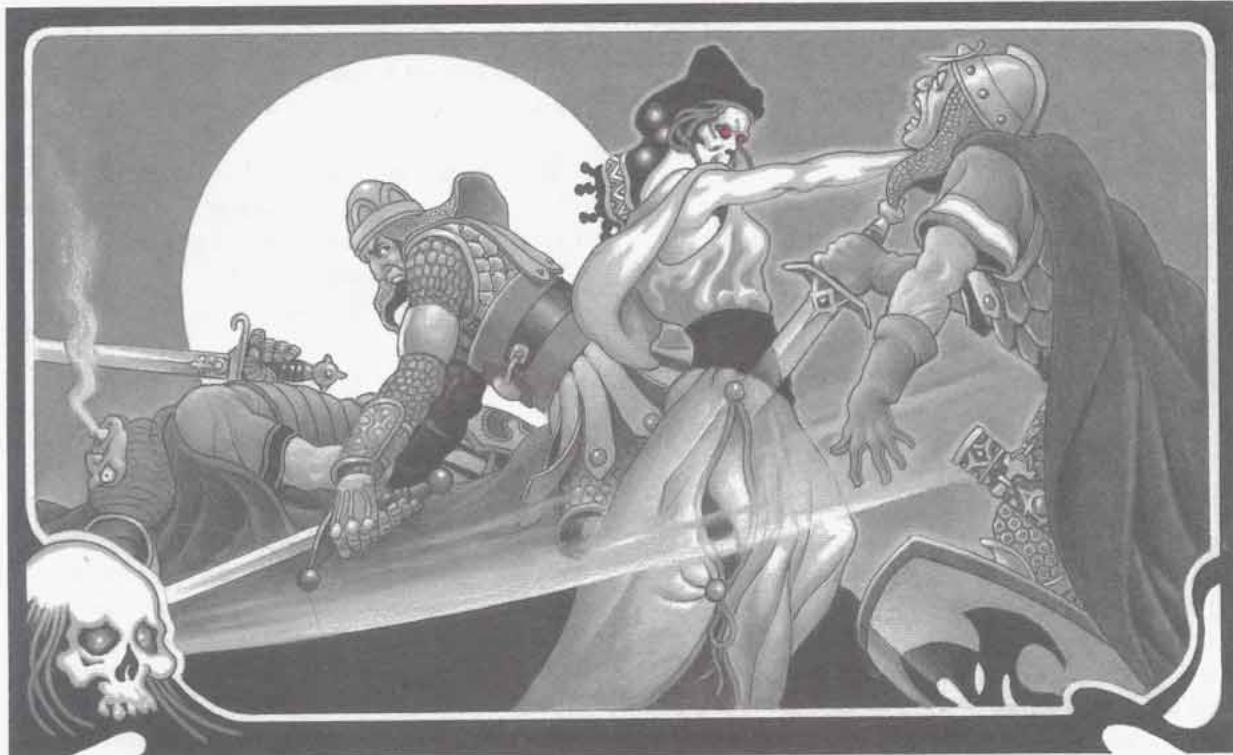
Vortex of Evil

The lich is able, once a week, to summon any and all evil creatures and living persons of evil alignment to its side. This summons isn't overriding, but rather instills a sense of greed and curiosity that is difficult to ignore.

The range of the vortex is equal to the lich's Intelligence score in miles. Those within this radius are drawn to the same location of the lich, though they are not sure why. They cannot state the reason for the attraction, but if asked, they will respond with a statement similar to: "I feel there's a great opportunity waiting for me."

The summons can be ignored if the character makes a saving throw vs. spell.

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Voice of Maleficence

The lich is able to wear down the will of anyone it talks to for a long duration (one turn or longer). Nonpsionic liches sometimes take prisoners to gain information from them. The voice of maleficence is an ability which puts the victim into an almost hypnotic trance. The end result is complete cooperation from the prisoner.

Victims can resist the voice by succeeding in a saving throw vs. spell after one turn of interrogation. Failure results in a sleepy trance wherein the victim will reveal any secret known to him or her. The saving throw may be rerolled every six turns. Each hour the lich talks to the victim, a +1 penalty is applied to subsequent saving rolls, making it more difficult for the victim to resist as time passes.

Ignore Metal

The lich is able to temporarily ignore the existence of metal with its physical body (including possessions), by magically putting

itself ever so slightly out of dimensional phase. It can walk through metal objects and *walls of iron* as if they were not there, and metal weapons inflict no damage except for any bonuses conveyed by magic. (Since Strength aids the metal's effect, its effect on the damage is also negated). Metal armor also has no effect, with only magical bonuses conveying a better Armor Class. Dexterity, however, still has its normal effect on AC.

Spells cast by the lich while in this state interact with metal as normal, however. Magical effects created by objects of metal that are used against the lich, such as wands made of metal, have their normal effect.

The lich can maintain this state for no more rounds than it has Hit Dice, and can use it but once per day.

Augmented Spellcasting

The lich is able to cast double the amount of 1st-through 3rd-level spells normally available to a wizard of the lich's level of experience.

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*Lead me from the unreal to the real!
Lead me from darkness to light!
Lead me from death to immortality!*
—Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

I was alone in my study, conducting some meditation, when I happened upon a secluded mind.

I say "secluded" because I do not think it meant of itself to be heard by someone such as me. Nevertheless, I saw what its mind generated. I looked into the eternal despair which utterly gripped it, until all it could think of was a final death where there would be no pain, where everything would finally, mercifully end.

I was moved to weep for this poor soul, but then I caught just a glimpse of what this creature truly was and I was instantly repulsed. I had that night accidentally looked into the mind of a lich. I doubt I will ever again see such pain or despair—or evil.

—From the journal of Kilrinia Trynar, master of the mental arts

This was the first example of lich psychology to cross to my desk. It was the first thing I read about the inner thoughts of the lich, and I began to wonder if the other things I had read, about evil ceremonies and quests for power and knowledge, were a gift or a curse for the lich. For an instant I felt pity. Fortunately, I also have found other texts which have given me a far different perspective. Be forewarned: Pity for a lich will cost you your life!

The first thing I should say about that foul creature of the undead is this: There are no good-hearted liches in the land of the Mists. This may seem like a rather obvious statement, but I wish to emphasize that *all* liches are completely evil. Perhaps they suffer, experience joy, feel pain, loneliness, passion, and all the emotions in between, but they are at their core completely evil and wholly undeserving of an

ounce of sympathy. Nevertheless, I would like to try to impart some *understanding* so the lich hunter may comprehend what motivates it.

While liches may be of any alignment in other places, those creatures who reside in the RAVENLOFT® campaign world are uniformly evil. They are, however, free to pursue a lawful, neutral, or chaotic lifestyle.

Dealing With Other Creatures

The lich certainly possesses enough poise to manage dealings with other creatures. I am sure there is no creature who can live its entire existence without contact with any another creature, if only an enemy. (I have experienced the odd feeling that my hostile intrusion upon a lich's privacy has been met with a sort of relief. This is *not* to say that it was glad to see me!) Liches are hardly conversationalists, and by their general nature are isolationists. The lich will approach every situation with a self-centered perspective. All of its talk will definitely be aimed toward gaining information or whatever else it desires.

Such objectives may be hampered by the lich's use of social graces and turns of phrase that are generally a century or more out of date—an eerie yet amusing trait. This is one good way to spot a lich in disguise: I would carefully watch any individual using speech that is older than the eldest villager—particularly if a stalwart young lad stands before you. Liches can polymorph themselves into many shapes, but their behavior can thwart their disguise. On the other hand, recall that these creatures are of genius intelligence. They will be extremely cunning and convincing in any guise. Doubtless, a lich will take steps to learn at least most of the behavior patterns of the creature it impersonates. A tiny slip may be your only clue, and a slim one at that.

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Murderer or Deceiver?

I believe that the outright destruction of a lich's adversaries is a plan of last resort. There is, even for this ruthless brute, merit in preserving other creatures—even enemies. After all, important secrets might be gained through interrogation of a captive. Servants of goodly deities possibly might be subverted. Subjects subverted or successfully interrogated represent a terrible victory for the lich against the forces of good, as well as the acquisition of powerful weapons to use against mortals.

Dealing With Lich Hunters

We tracked the Hazlanic lich that called itself the Moonbane almost to the Nightmare Lands and through a system of catacombs in which we would have been hopelessly lost without the keen eyes of Torenor the dwarf. At last we found the lich's lab and broke through the false ceiling, right where I guessed it would be.

Therein we found the enraged lich, guarding a large ruby with all its gruesome defenses. A bloody battle ensued and, through some apparent stroke of luck, I was the sole survivor. With my last drop of strength, I drove my short sword through the breast of the monster and it collapsed to the floor in a pile of dust and bone.

Though my wracked muscles forbade me to move another inch, I drew forth a hammer from my trusty satchel and smashed the ruby. The stone exploded with a firestorm of blazing mists and I fell, exhausted and near death.

I was torn by the deaths of my comrades, and unable to understand how I had survived the onslaught—it seemed that the lich had not used its magic to greatest effect. As soon as I was able, I hired a new termination crew and returned to the lair. As I suspected, the lab and every other trace of the lich was gone.

The whole thing had been but a ruse, but I was on to it now. I declared the hunt a success and left, secretly planning to return a day later.

Sure enough, the lich had slipped back. . . .

—From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

Despite its best laid plans and careful measures, the machinations of the lich are sometimes discovered, as well as its very lair. In these situations, I have found that the lich often will make an attempt to somehow trick its assassins into believing that it has left the area.

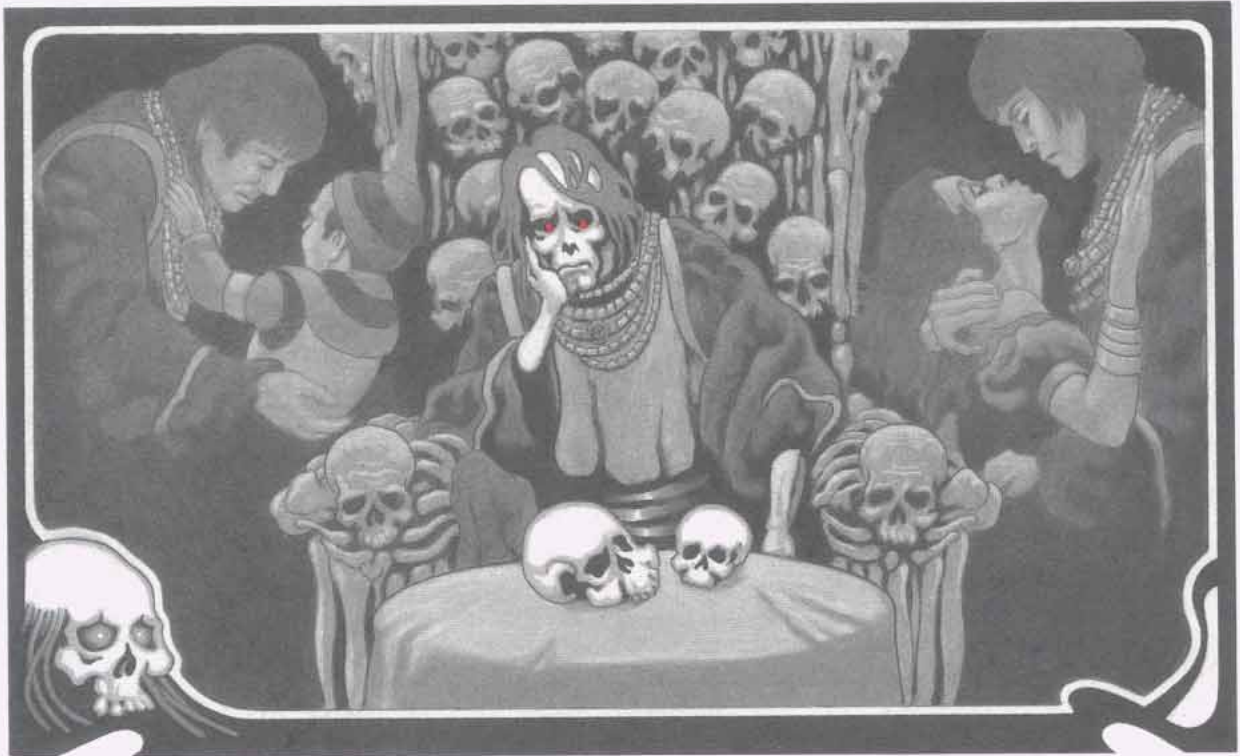
Rather than make a display of outright defiance, it seems that it is of paramount importance to the lich to convince the hunters that they have succeeded in their task. Of course, the lich usually will destroy everyone in the hunting party save one. (In three separate cases, I was the sole survivor.) It then depends on the surviving member to carry the news that the lich has been killed back to the living. Once that is done, the undead wizard can return to its dark designs in peace, comfortable in the knowledge that no more living creatures will come after it. A crafty lich may even scale down its operations in the area for a period of years, perhaps even for one or two generations of the creatures living in the area, to convince the hunters of their success. After all, what are fifty or one hundred years to such a creature, except plenty of time to research an ultrapowerful spell?

Virtual Immortality

All lichs were once mortals. Somewhere at the core of the lich is a mortal mind, suddenly and irrevocably made immortal; this must be a shock for anyone. Being an undead master of magic complicates matters, making a stable mind rather difficult to come by among lichs—at least during the early years of its existence.

I noted in my *Guide to Vampires* that those newly immortal creatures go through several psychological stages, from elation to apathy. I believe that lichs experience a similar rush of power at the first realization of a successful transformation, but I do not think that they ever feel the vampire's weariness with the passing of eons. While the lich's intensely magical nature removes it from accepted standards of sanity

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and insanity, there is no evidence to suggest that the strain of immortality has any deleterious effects in the long run. Having entered into extensive discourse with divers wizards, priests, sages, and philosophers, I have drawn the following conclusions from my observations of the lich.

The lich must undergo a transformation of its mind—the higher mind—in addition to the physical and mystical changes. It must grasp the ramifications of eternal life so that it can function effectively in its new form. Immortality can make one drunk with carelessness, but the lich must remain in control of itself, lest it put itself in unnecessary danger.

Aspects of life upon which mortals depend are daily rituals of maintenance. We sleep, eat, and perform many duties which divide our days into sections in which we can more closely devote our energies. I discipline myself with a reward system—if there is a duty I must perform of which I am not particularly fond, then I will give myself a reward once the duty is

performed. But imagine not having anything to add variety to your day other than the countless conjurations of spell research.

Imagine not having to sleep or eat. When night comes, there is no effect upon you. You need no light to see, nor a moon to sleep under. You do not eat, so your sense of taste is worthless to you. Your sense of smell is gone with your mortality. Lacking skin, you cannot feel things as do mortals. And, as I have previously speculated, sight (and probably hearing as well) is no more aesthetic to a lich than a wall is to a bat. All the senses, with all the pleasure they may afford, are gone, so you have nothing stimulating to look forward to at the end of the day—no ale after a long journey, no fresh meat after a good hunt, no scent of your home as you enter it, no sweet caress of a child or lover to comfort you. Can power or evil wash away the appreciation of these things?

Time loses meaning. Days become longer, shorter, then altogether meaningless. Each day becomes the same, with the concept of time a

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vague memory. All that is for you is only your own self. You may monitor the outside world, sometimes very closely, but it is easy to lose track of what progresses outside your lair when you neglect to peer outside a window for a decade, favoring instead to research a new-found text or create a particular amalgamation. What if you sat down to read a book, then looked up from it a generation later, when there was no one alive to recognize, no peers with which to debate a fine point?

Perhaps the lich undergoes a psychological ordeal similar to that of the vampire, when boredom (for lack of a better word) erodes its will to continue. Mages in all likelihood undergo the transformation to lichdom in haste after discovering the secret, but they may pay the price in personal anguish for many years.

Nevertheless, they all seem to recover. There is some aspect of the lich's mind that is able to undergo those torments and weather them out. It may take a few months or a century—but all liches eventually become accustomed to their existence and function comfortably.

It may also be that some—perhaps even most—liches despair and die or fade away or otherwise terminate their existence as some vampires do. If so, this is a blessing to the living as well as a mercy to the lich. How many more liches would plague the world otherwise?

What Goal, Then?

What, then, does the lich do with the time it has? What time-consuming diversions stir its black heart? What goals the lich undertakes during the early part of its existence are likely determined by its interests previous to its transformation from a living creature.

Generally, mages who undergo the transformation are already well established with riches, a well-secured lair, a library, and a laboratory in which to carry out their arcane rituals, so those things are not the probable objects of their interests. For these liches, there remains the quest for rare spell materials. Indeed, the pursuit of magical components may

be the lich's first order of business because it presents a familiar activity in which to engage while the freshly-altered monster adjusts to its new form. (Take note: Sometimes the best way to find a lich is to find that which it seeks!)

Once its lair is built and stocked, the lich will surely turn to the next logical pursuit: power. Being an undead master of magic is of little meaning if the power is not exercised. To this end the lich can undertake any number of efforts designed to test and expand its power base.

One common method of bolstering one's authority is to attempt to gain control of a kingdom by planting a lich-controlled king upon a throne. But this sort of power may be fleeting to the lich, as the king and his subjects die too quickly to provide lasting entertainment or any use outside of an experimental nature. Such a lich must eventually find a new arena to exercise its prerogative, and that means finding whole new concepts of power and control—and this means exploration into other realms of reality, beyond human ken.

I have heard a quaint phrase: "There's a whole world out there." For a lich, with the knowledge to travel among worlds and planes of existence, there is quite an arena of experiences to choose. Perhaps a lich may undertake the conquest of a small world or continent on a planet that is generally ignored by other world-traveling mages. This would certainly present much stimulation and opportunity for evil. The planning and organization alone could take decades, the execution centuries.

Among all of these plans is, of course, the quest for higher magic. This quest, as I have stated, is a neverending, pervading characteristic of the lich's existence. There are *always* more magicks to command, secrets to know, and artifacts to find or create. The lich is driven to find the answers. Sometimes it is for its own sake, and other times it is a means to even more power.

But always it's for the cause of evil.

IV: THE LAIR



ou fools! You hurl yourselves into the void without the slightest notion of who or what awaits you. . . ."

—Kamar-Ri of the Ebon Eye

The lich is a creature that takes enormous care in where it lives, most especially in securing its domicile from the prying eyes and efforts of other creatures. Even its most trusted minions are ignorant of the true nature and plan of a lich's lair. It spends many years planning and constructing a perfect stronghold from which to operate. Given enough time and resources, both of which the lich has in abundance, it will surely construct an impenetrable fortress.

Where They Lair

Of paramount importance to the lich is its own security. Before any other factor is considered, the lich will seek a locale that is defended by natural barriers or one that is easily constructed upon to provide superior defense. Once that prerequisite is satisfied, two schools of thought govern the choice of lair: a need for privacy versus a quest for political power.

Liches who crave privacy tend to enjoy locales that are in a hostile environment. The more that mortals dislike it, the more favorably it is viewed. Cold bogs, arctic wastes, desert seas, beneath the depths, and the highest peaks are popular places for a lich to settle.

Since most liches begin as mages, the typical first domicile is a tower or similar construct. This soon proves to be inadequate, however, as a tower is vulnerable to attack. The lich may then seek an area that is difficult to reach by any means, which serves as an intermediary home until the lich is established and powerful enough to begin construction of a more elaborate haven. Ruins are popular, as they

already contain foundations and raw materials necessary for additional construction. In addition, a ruined castle (for example) will almost always have a great deal of dead buried nearby. These serve as a pool of labor upon which the lich draws to create its lair.

However, no matter how far removed or impenetrable the lich's lair, it must remain at least partially accessible. Servants, living or dead, must come and go. Also, a strategy among both liches and mortals is to take and keep hostages. In most situations, the hostage-taker must allow verification that the hostage is still alive, so the lich's lair must be at least partially accessible to mortals. Therein lies the hope of all lich hunters: there must be a way in.

If the lich is seeking to establish itself as a political entity, it is virtually required to pick a well-known location to facilitate relations with the local mortal authorities. (Such a lich recognizes the mortal's need to associate a place with a leader and his power.) This may compromise privacy and present an inviting target, but the creature will assuredly take steps to remain secure against all attacks, so the lich will gain respect as it gains power. Of course, a lich with a gift for illusion may build an empire right under the noses of its most adamant enemies. If my theory about Lord Azalin is true, that would certainly be the case.

Magic Within the Lair

I have dreamed many nights of what a lich must guard in the deepest recesses of its lair. Such treasures may be witnessed by no more than one person in ten generations. A lich has dealt with magic during all of its existence—even when it was mortal. Considering the ultrapowerful wizard's capacity to enchant, the number of magical wares contained within the lich's private stores must be staggering. A dragon's hoard, that fabled mountain of wealth upon which the great wyrm sleeps, may not even compare to the magical richness and variety of a lich's treasure chest!

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The lich treats magical items as we mortals treat tools. A wand that delivers lightning from its tip would be to a lich as a writing implement to a scholar—a thing to be taken for granted.

I am told by numerous mages that the enchantment of common objects is a tedious and exhausting practice. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that a lich would rather steal a magical item than make it himself. I have confirmed this idea by luring a lich out of its lair with the rumor of a powerful magical item. (The lich made off with nothing more than a common twig; that small coup undeservedly enhanced my reputation among my cohorts, but it also earned me a blood vendetta with the lich.)

The methods by which a lich will gain what it desires are invariably circumstantial. The lich will always study and deduce the most efficient approach to the theft. Anything from extreme subtlety and quiet deception to a bold, horrific, and lightning-quick assault may occur. Only one thing is certain: if a lich desires something, it will not cease in its efforts to acquire it. It will doggedly pursue anything which it feels is necessary to its arcane practices.

Based on the aforementioned opinion regarding the enchantment of common items, I believe that the lich spends more of its efforts in the creation of strange and dire artifacts. Centuries of research, investigation, and exploration on the part of the lich must yield enchantments that even the most powerful of living mages will never comprehend. Who knows what manner of arcane object one might find within the lair: conch shells that spew sheets of lightning when blown or cauldrons that bubble with pitch-black liquids which seethe with a life and evil of their own?

Perhaps the only comforting thought we mortals may entertain is that the lich rarely ventures outside its lair with the most powerful artifacts it possesses. Their terrible functions hopefully will remain locked away with the lich, only to be discovered and experienced by the courageous few who hunt that cursed creature of darkness.

When creating a lich's lair, the DM is encouraged to manufacture bizarre and terrible devices of magical destruction. Such items should reflect the individual personality of the lich, and most of them should not be usable by anyone but the lich under any circumstances, except as cursed items.

The Library

I was in the deepest pit beneath the mountain that we came upon the heart, the treasure of the lich called Phantom's Bane—we found its library. Here was a prize beyond the value of all the gold in Darkon, beyond the price of life and death, beyond the worth of all the magic that the Phantom's Bane had ever created or wielded! Row after row, shelf upon shelf, stack against stack, the volumes climbed the walls to the ceiling and stretched into a seeming eternity of darkness beyond.

And standing in the center of the room was the Phantom's Bane itself! The monster regarded us with a mixture of impatience and amusement, as if we were a band of noisy children disturbing its private study.

"Well met, my intelligent little gadflies," said the lich in a whisper that issued from within our heads. "You have slipped through my screen in your thoughtless efforts to taste of my sweets, and now I shall be forced to swat you dead, myself."

"Blast him!" shouted Gedlan Ironheart to the mage Shauten, and I recall thinking it odd that a dwarf would call for the use of magic, but Shauten could do nothing.

And I understood. It was not any spell of the Phantom's Bane that stayed the wizard's hand, it was the prospect of destroying the accumulated knowledge of a millennium with the wave of a hand and the release of a fireball. The lich understood, too, and it laughed aloud.

Of all the creatures I have hunted and battled, this one was the cruelest. . . .

—From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

IV: THE LAIR

Is there any creature in the universe that has not aspired to immortality? Some seek it through their children, others through works of artistic or scientific achievement, and still others seek to live beyond the bounds of natural life through most unnatural means. In this ambition—to live forever—we certainly may identify with the lich.

Yet physical immortality is so far removed from personal mortal experience that it represents little more than a dream's goal, an end in itself. For the lich, however, immortality is merely a means to an end, and that end is *power*. More specifically, it is the power of *knowledge*. Hence, it follows that the lich's greatest treasure of all is its library.

The span of subjects that populate the shelves of a lich's library is exhaustive. As a scholar, I could spend hours or even days merely sifting through the titles to be found upon those shelves, and I would salivate in jealous desire as I deliberated. Of course, central to a lich's library will be the tomes filled with lists of rare and exotic components and processes needed to perform the rituals of spellcasting, but there are countless other subjects that might demand the undead wizard's time and study. Besides, even a lich has intellectual pursuits other than the study of magical artifacts. (There is no law stating that a lich may not have an appreciation of art or literature.) To this end, the lich keeps a book collection the likes of which few mortals have ever laid eyes upon. The lich has literally all the time in the world to study any subject, from the construction of a trap that will confound a master thief to the preparation of a gourmet feast laced with deadly yet delicious spices.

The masterpiece of the lich's library, of course, is its spell book. Since the lich is subject to the mortal restrictions of spellcasting, it must scribe its spells in a tome of some sort. There cannot be a more closely guarded item within the entire lich complex. I feel confident that no more than two mortals have viewed a lich's tome of spells and lived.

A lich's library is the ideal place for adventuring parties to uncover clues that will take them on the most extraordinary quests or to find vital information that will solve a long-standing mystery. The casting of a *legend lore* spell allows characters to locate the book wherein relevant information lies, but the DM is always free to mislead the party in whatever way best serves the campaign. Note that the casting of the spell requires 1d4 turns—plenty of time for the party to be discovered.

Of course, most liches would rather destroy their collections than let a group of “mere mortals” comb through them. Some liches may even have duplicated their libraries for just such an emergency.

Deception Within the Lair

We broke through the final block of stone just before the moon sank below the horizon and found a long, smooth, circular tunnel that wound in many directions. We eventually followed it to a chamber where we discovered a most unusual laboratory: There was a place for alchemical studies, as well as facilities for astronomy, magic, and a host of other sciences which I could hardly understand.

Shortly after this discovery, we were set upon by some sort of mystical ghast that seemed to leech energy from us. With the aid of our priest, we were able to defeat it, but this was only a sample of the type of minions which the lich had placed in guard of his lair.

We had to withdraw and return a total of five times before we were confident that all of the minions were defeated. We searched the lair for three months. During that time, we found close to five score dead end tunnels and false doors and chambers. This search culminated in the discovery of a room secreted away in a pocket of space hollowed out of the mountain itself. Sorcery was responsible for it, and it was by sorcery alone that we discovered it. By the time we tunneled to the room, the lich had long since departed, leaving behind a magical trinket which

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baited us into that room.

Undoubtedly, the lich still resides somewhere in the mountain, secluded in some deep, secret lair that we will never see. It eluded us masterfully, taking us down so many false paths, forcing us to waste so much time, that the lich could have prepared many an elaborate trap for us in the meanwhile.

I can only guess at why we were not killed, one by one. I believe it was so we could live knowing we were defeated utterly by the lich. It is still alive, still spinning its terrible political webs, and still laughing at the mere mortals who like toddlers fumbled in the dark for it.

—Hatcheln Pirol, adventurer and scholar

As the account of Hatcheln Pirol attests, the lich practices extensive deception within its lair. Whole complexes within complexes are built to lure intruders to their deaths, lead them on futile chases, and even fool them into thinking they have accomplished their objectives.

This deception is carried as far as the lich can take it. A lich will construct duplicates of nearly everything it owns, preparing copies of texts, objects, rooms, chests—everything. It will even enchant objects to trigger magic-seeking spells and devices. A group of mortals will seldom find the true objective, the lich's inner sanctum, without finding multiple fraudulent chambers in the interim.

There is really no way of discerning which chamber is the true sanctum, for each chamber may be guarded in some manner by a creature that closely—or exactly—resembles the lich. Who would not believe that after many trials of courage, mettle, and magic, the discovery of a deeply hidden and guarded chamber is not the true sanctum, especially when a lich enters the chamber and lays waste to half the party in a foul effort to expel them from the room? Such trickery has been a double-disappointment to many who have labored long and dangerously to destroy the monster.

Take extreme care. The only way to be absolutely sure of success is to reduce the entire lair complex to dust—and then search

again. Only intensive excavation will provide confirmation, and maybe not even then.

Guards of the Lair

For many masters of evil, an efficient method of preventing tampering within one's dungeon is to dispatch servants to kill trespassers. No matter how extensive the magical capabilities of the lich, this additional ring of defense must be placed, for if left to their own devices, most lich hunters will eventually defeat any physical or magical trap that prevents their entrance.

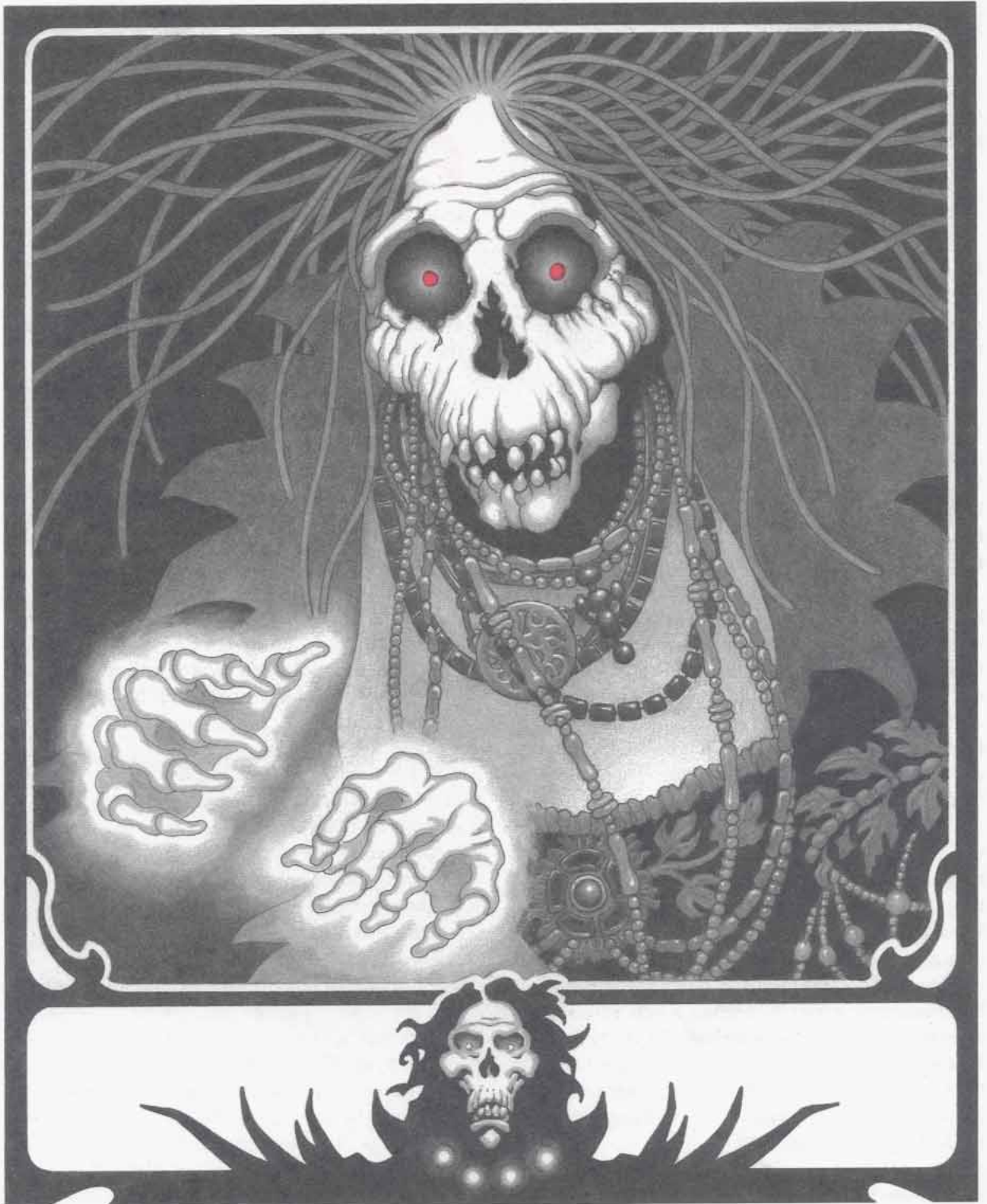
To this end, the lich usually maintains a heavy guard of undead soldiers whose sole purpose is to keep watch over the lich's surroundings. Therefore, the reader must understand that in order to face a lich, one must first face its army of minions. For most hunters, this means wasting the precious power and magic needed to defeat a lich on its subordinates. Although the master possesses the might to destroy a mortal army, itself, the lich will prefer to face even a few hunters *after* they have been drained of strength and spells. Understand that before you step boldly forth to vanquish this foe!

Since they are the easiest to control, the most frequently used guard is an animated skeleton. These minions are used to patrol the outer, less secure areas of the lair, as they are easily turned by priests and paladins.

Deeper, more secured sections of the lair require minions that are more difficult for priests and other adventurers to deal with. In these sensitive sectors, the lich will typically employ wights, wraiths, mummies, spectres, and ghosts, and even more potent undead minions (see Chapter VII).

It should be noted that the lich may allocate its guards in a deceptive manner, deluding the mortals into thinking they have discovered a vital area of the lair. As always, the DM is encouraged to be cunning.

U: LICH MAGIC



U: LICH MAGIC



*ouble, double toil
and trouble;
Fire burn and
cauldron bubble.
Fillet of a fenny
snake,*

*In the cauldron boil
and bake.
Eye of newt and toe
of frog,
Wool of bat and
tongue of dog,
Adder's fork and
blind-worm's sting,
Lizard's leg and
howlet's wing,
For a charm of
pow'rful trouble,*

Like a hell-broth boil and bubble.

—William Shakespeare

"Mages aspire to greatness through their magic. Some seek personal fame and fortune, or perhaps greater understanding of the multiple worlds around us. Others seek position with royalty as an advisor, enforcer, or even a war wizard.

"Then there are others who seek to gain even greater stature. 'Stature' as they would see it, 'inescapable doom' as we would view it. For these mages seek to become the ultimate wielders of magical power—they seek to become liches.

"It means great power, yes, but it also signifies eternal damnation as a walking corpse. The lich is cursed to live forever in torment, with brittle skin, rotten flesh, and crumbling bones that serve as a vessel for a spirit utterly without the passions and concerns it had when it was a living thing.

"Nothing can save the lich—nothing can it ever do to repent or avoid the consequences of its power-hungry fever. All liches are doomed, not to die, but to live forever in a hell of their own creation!"

*—Father Ligutious, during a conversation with
Dr. Van Richten*

The lich is an undead thing—its body is a twisted mockery of what it once was, and its

very spirit is something that can even change bodies, having none of worth to call its own except that hard, heartless receptacle, the phylactery. The lich's life is an alien form of existence, and one against which the mortal heart should naturally rebel.

One thing, and one thing alone, drives a mage to accept this state. One thing persuades a living person to consign himself to an eternally torturous existence: *magic*. Magic lures them, and magic is the fruit of which they eat.

Worst of all, their appetites are insatiable.

Necromancy

The most common magical discipline for a lich is, unsurprisingly, necromancy—"death magic." Spells that deal with death are as much a part of the lich's existence as water is to a fish.

I am a scholar and a doctor, not a mage. Therefore, I cannot convey the whole picture where necromantic spells are concerned. I fear that all I can provide to you is a mere outsider's sampling of what evil lurks within the school of the necromantic arts. However, I have been able to enlist the assistance of a few mages who are sympathetic to my cause of alerting the unsuspecting to the dangers of lichdom, and who would further educate those who wish to oppose the lich's influences. What follows is a compilation of several discussions held in secret rooms, away from prying ears, and information from texts that more than one person risked his life to provide.

Great evil thrives here, in this land of the Mists, and it flourishes even as you read this. Take this information and use it to fight the lich at every opportunity!

Liches perform in all respects as a specialist wizard of the necromantic school, with the following exceptions: they suffer no penalties when learning spells from other schools, and they are not prohibited from employing spells of the opposite school (illusion). To the contrary, liches are quite adept at casting illusionary magic.

The Importance of Research

I turned the corner and came upon a figure leaning over one of our crystal balls. It surprised me, as the library was closed for the night in celebration of a local festival. Even though I approached the figure from behind, it sat up abruptly; I must have made some noise to alert it to my presence. I called to it, as I did not recognize the person as any of my students.

What turned in answer nearly frightened me to death. It was wearing a fine cloak, though a bit old, so I was completely unprepared for the dry, tight skin, and the empty black eye sockets which seemed to draw in the darkness around them, except for two crimson points of light that served as eyes. I recognized it immediately as a lich and raised my hands to cast a warding spell, but it employed some device and faded from view before I could complete my incantation, most likely returning from whence it came.

I inspected the crystal ball it had been gazing upon and noticed that several modifications had been made, particularly among the enchanted lattice of the base which supported the ball. I then attempted to use the ball, but was unable to. We have since studied the ball and its base thoroughly, but we cannot discern the true extent or purpose of the lich's work.

—From the journal of Mirinalithiar

As much as the lich might desire it, the undead wizard is unable to learn the secrets of magic by any quick method, save for certain highly dangerous rituals which, even if successfully realized, might not reveal the specific secrets desired. Just as living mages do, the lich must undertake extensive and far-reaching studies into rare, usually unique texts in order to learn of the mystic arts.

I have postulated that lichs perpetuate their existence solely for the purpose of augmenting their magical prowess. It comes as no surprise, then, that they must continually develop their arcane abilities in order to survive. Hence, research is more than an intellectual pursuit; learning is life itself to the lich. Without study,

the lich is unable to survive, let alone reach its potential. There is not a single lich in existence who is not seeking some crucial text with answers for which mortals do not even know the questions.

The passage at left, from the journal of Mirinalithiar, relates one method of acquiring knowledge that lichs must occasionally call upon. There are times when even the most extensively appointed lich must yield to public or semiprivate collections such as those of a college library or nobleman's book pile. In such cases, the lich will (as surreptitiously as possible) use its magic to enter the place where the articles are kept. This generally means coming during the night or otherwise when the lich is certain to be alone. Such lichs will very rarely, if ever, damage or remove those articles of research, so the owners are not often aware that there has been any tampering or covert use of their facilities.

On the other hand, lichs that operate in environments where no opposition exists, or at least where they perceive none, will not hesitate to not only take what they desire, but to destroy as many magical artifacts, tomes, and other information as needed to keep others ignorant of the ways of magic.

No doubt the perceptive reader has already discerned the importance of this information. In either case, *the lich is compelled for its own sake to visit repositories of arcane knowledge.* When seeking to destroy a lich, the hunter is much safer if he never enters the lair of his prey. Better by far is it to lure the quarry into a trap. All one needs is the right bait. . . .

Seek the lich in places of learning, when mortals have gone for the night. Place the rarest of tomes in a defensible position and prepare your deadliest traps. Let fly the rumor of strange and powerful texts, and wait in ambush with all the might you can muster—with a stroke of luck, the prey may come to you!

U: LICH MAGIC

Power Rituals

When considering specific subjects the lich is most likely to study, we must first estimate what the lich desires most from magic. For example, the lich's proficiency in necromantic magic may be directly attributable to the fact that the lich is (technically) dead. Its unliving existence provides a powerful incentive to master the ways of death and to manipulate all things deadly. Of course, necromancy is among the most potent of magics, and that is quite appealing to the lich as well.

In fact, *potency* is the key, I think. These mages of doom have embraced an unnatural existence for the sake of power; perhaps they have also accepted living death in order to practice magic so powerful that it would kill any mortal mage. Such was the quality of magic to which Harmon Ruscheider, whom I introduced in Chapter I, was a witness. I cannot say whether or not he came to the same conclusion as I—that the lich was practicing a ritual necessary to its continuation—but it is clear that the lich was indulging in a rite that ultimately annihilated it. If such magic is not imperative to the monster's well-being, it must at least be irresistible to its psychology.

The account below, dictated to me by Dr. Ruscheider in a lucid moment on that last night of his nightmarish life, illustrates my point:

"I was transported, in my cage, to a point where I might look upon the lich's activities from a great distance, using a magical device it had given me for this express purpose.

"As I viewed the lich through the device, which somehow afforded me the ability to hear what I watched as well, it called out unusual words and gesticulated in a most harsh, abrupt manner, working its way from point to point around a circle of bones. This continued for some time—perhaps three or four hours—when suddenly the sky above the lich blazed with light, or rather, a large patch of the sky about the same dimension as the lich's circle of bones became

agitated and illuminated in its own magical tempest. The chaos mounted with alarming speed while the lich stepped to the center of the circle.

"Just as suddenly, the lich raised its arms toward the sky and was immediately struck by a tremendous bolt of lightning whose accompanying thunder deafened me to my own scream! I had the luck to have blinked just as the flash exploded over the mountain peaks, else I would have been blinded, I think, permanently. Even as the lightburst penetrated my eyelids and forced me to drop the spy-piece to clutch at my face, I wave of heat washed over my body and threw me against the back of my cage. Mercifully, I fled consciousness.

"Only the gods know how much later I came to a groggy awareness. It was almost dawn, and my head was bleeding in a slow trickle, fortunately slowed because of the alpine cold. After a brief self-search for broken bones and other injuries, I was able to retrieve the seeing device and look for my captor.

"I discovered that the lich had been forced into a shapeless heap upon the ground. The circle of bones was gone, as was a good part of the mountain peak and everything upon it. I was sure the lich had gone too far and obliterated itself, and I rejoiced.

"Then, to my lasting horror, the lich arose! Its back was to me, but I could clearly make out the brilliancy of its eyes, bathing the entire peak in a blood red wash of light.

"It turned toward me slowly, as if it were not quite sure of its footing after such an explosive experience. Perhaps I was fooling myself, but the monster seemed to be as exhausted as it was invigorated. Had I not felt another wave of power when it looked upon me—a wave as intense as that which had assaulted me previously—I would have been certain that the lich would expire upon the spot.

"I know not how it could see me at that extreme distance, but when its head was toward me it raised its death-cloaked hand in my direction and smiled with a gruesome, vainglorious grin."

U: LICH MAGIC



Ruscheider's story suggests that there are occasions when a lich needs to channel a great deal of power through its body, for a significant spell or ritual. To address this issue, I have coined the phrase *power ritual*. I am given to understand that a living mage's only option for gaining additional power from an outside source is to employ magical devices designed to amplify specific spells or energies. But a lich apparently is able to draw upon unknown energy sources, perhaps from that Negative Material plane, itself, to amplify its powers.

If the lich's remarks to Ruscheider following that exhibition are to be trusted, the power ritual is one that only requires components that are used in other, more common rituals and alchemical projects. What is important is the time and location the ritual takes place. The lich must find a place that is high above the ground—the higher, the better. This place must also be relatively smooth of surface, covered with vegetation, and ideally it has once been used for worship. The best site either will have

been blessed or cursed by a priest at one time in the past. The current use of the land isn't a consideration, although I'm sure that a lich would take great delight in destroying a religious structure to clear an area for the ritual.

Once the lich has secured an appropriate area, it rings the ground with bones that serve as some sort of circle of power. This circle must be in place for a fortnight. During this time, the lich casts an assortment of spells each day or night when the moon's reaches its apex as it waxes from new to full phase. This apparently prepares the ritual area for the influx of power and serves to harness the power of the blessing or curse that permeates the site.

If the ritual is performed during a key astronomical event, then the resulting power surge is most spectacular. Ruscheider's captor referred specifically to an event that I have never witnessed: a point when the light of the moon is blotted from the sky and the moon itself is an eerie, dim orange ball. The event is

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called an *eclipse*, and it produces—or releases—certain mystical energies that apparently generate a particularly powerful surge.

After the ritual is performed, the lich is infused with staggering amounts of power. Fortunately for us mortals, the power begins to deplete instantly—there is no way for a lich to store this power once it accepts it. This power can be used for a variety of tasks, including the casting of magical spells and rites. Ruscheider's keeper told him that it could immediately cast far-reaching spells to whisk it away to planes, dimensions, and worlds so far away and fantastic that few mortals can even conceive of such bizarre, eldritch places. Several mages I have consulted have suggested that such a ritual may otherwise result in temporary physical invulnerability, keenly raised awareness to the point of omniscience, and the ability to carry more spells than a wizard could cast, back to back, in an entire day!

Those same mages were quick to point out the dangers of such a ritual as well. An extended period of unconsciousness was the least of the fatal possibilities.

Planar travel, apparently, was the intent of Ruscheider's jailer, but he believed that the attempts were completely unsuccessful. The lich left the Doctor in his cell to perform these feats, only to return shortly and, in a tantrum, torment him to the brink of insanity.

One month later, the lich repeated its power ritual, again allowing Ruscheider to watch, and achieved an even greater reaction from the elements. Prepared for the firestorm this time, Ruscheider lay low until the blast had passed over him. When the smoke cleared from the peak, no trace of the lich remained. Shortly thereafter, the prisoner escaped his cage, which had been damaged by the blast, and made his way to my doorstep.

Did the lich achieve its objective? I think not; at least not in the sense that it expected. I am confident that the monster blew itself to dusty particles. So much the better for us all!

DMs are encouraged to create their own power rituals, but here are some guidelines:

Optimum results of a power ritual occur at altitudes exceeding 5,000 feet. For every 1,000 feet below 5,000 (beginning at 4,999 feet), the possibility of any effects occurring—positive or negative—is reduced by 25%. (The ritual is ineffectual at 1,999 feet or less.)

Note that the RAVENLOFT® campaign environment often twists and negates the power of magical spells and items; lich magic, no matter how powerful, cannot overcome this.

The circle of bones is vital to the success of the ritual. It defines the area in which the power will be encapsulated and concentrated. The circle must be exactly 100 feet in diameter. Every living thing within the boundaries will be absorbed when the ritual is completed; no saving throws allowed. If there is the slightest error in the lich's measurements, the resulting explosion will inflict 20d10 points of damage upon everything within a 1-mile radius of the circle (save vs. spell for half damage).

Eight spells must be cast in rapid succession each night, one at each of the eight compass points in the circle of bones, beginning when the moon reaches its apex in the sky. (In realms where no moon exists, the ritual must begin at the exact same time each night.) This ritual begins when the moon is new and continues until it reaches full phase, including the first two nights of the full moon (16 ritual castings). Each night the castings begin at the next compass point from whence the ritual began the night before (resulting in two castings of each spell at each point over the 16 rituals). Failure to strictly adhere to the ritual will result in a 25% chance of a power ritual malfunction and the explosion described above. The spells to be cast are: *wind wall*, *contact other plane*, *distance distortion*, *guards and wards*, *legend lore*, *wildzone*, *binding*, *wish*, and *stabilize*. On the third night of the full moon, the lich stands at the center of the circle, casts *chain contingency* and *wildfire*, and the power ritual is initiated.

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When a lich completes a power ritual, the DM should roll the percentile dice again. On a roll of 1% to 75%, the ritual has been a complete success and the lich (the DM) chooses one of the enhancements suggested below, or the DM is free to create a different one. Bear in mind that the lich is already an extremely powerful creature, and that excessively potent powers may put it beyond the scope of most parties.

Titanic Power Increase

The lich is granted an influx of power that will persist for a period of 1d20 hours. During that time, any spells cast by the lich will have *triple* the normal effect. This includes range, duration, damage, and area of effect where applicable.

Personal Mystical Shield

The lich acquires a mystical aura that completely protects it from all forms of physical harm for 1d20 days. The aura itself is invisible. The lich cannot be physically touched by any object, magical or nonmagical, while the aura exists. Exceptions are weapons vs. undead or enchanted creatures, and weapons that have a +4 or greater magical bonus.

Accelerated Learning

The lich's capacity to conduct research is multiplied 100 times over, enabling it to study arcane texts without a break over a period of one month and gain sufficient experience to raise it to the next Hit Die level.

During the month of study, the lich cannot be interrupted for more than one turn, cumulative, or the attempt is wasted.

Spell Knowledge

The lich becomes permanently able to instantly learn any spell that it finds, and then scribe it into its spell book without the need of casting a spell. In effect, the lich develops a photographic memory. The new spells are not magically put into the lich's mind, however—it must first amass the proper information from other texts and then scribe them.

If the roll of the percentile dice is 76-00%, then the power ritual has broken down. In this case, the DM can roll on the table below or make up a different failed ritual effect.

Failed Ritual Effects Table

d10	Ritual Effect
Roll	
1-3	Coma
4-5	Power depletion
6-7	Extended weakness
8-9	Death
10	Complete disintegration

Coma

The lich falls into a coma, on the site of the power ritual, that lasts for 1d20 days. Once the coma passes, the lich suffers no ill effects.

Power Depletion

For 1d20 days, all activities the lich undertakes are less effective, determined by rolling percentile dice and assigning the resulting chance to spellcasting and all other actions. Furthermore, all physical and mental abilities (including Armor Class, Hit Dice, morale, etc.) temporarily function at the percentage level of the roll. Psionic talents are unusable during this period as well.

Extended Weakness

The lich cannot employ any spell higher than 6th level for 1d20 days. Furthermore, the lich always moves last in combat and can attack only during every other round. Finally, it can regain hit points only through magical means.

Death

The lich dies, and its life-essence returns to its phylactery.

Complete Disintegration

The lich is disintegrated and its phylactery shatters. This is a permanent state from which the lich can never recover. The body of the lich is reduced to fine powder that is extremely flammable (functions as *smoke powder*).

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Lich Spells and Magical Items

The lich corrupts spells that living mages use for less nefarious purposes. I am told it is possible for a mage to study necromancy or, at the minimum, learn a handful of spells from that school without subscribing to evil temptation, for some of these spells are not in themselves instruments of torment or evil. But liches take spells which by their nature are fairly benign and impart their own tormented psychology upon them, warping the effects to produce black incantations that no one should utter! Through means I thoroughly do not understand, the lich most often expands upon existing frameworks to achieve desired effects, rather than crafting spells of its own. A majority of its time, then, must be spent in researching pre-existing magical lore.

This does not deny the lich access to a certain twisted creativity. I personally have disposed of a number of *trinkets* created by a few liches—items of terrible power and dire consequences for those who attempt to use them: rings that steal memories and false body parts that graft themselves to unwary finders, forever altering and disfiguring them. A lich's private collection of magical items produces effects as varied as snowflakes and as numerous as the stars. Should any such bauble fall into the hands of the reader, he would be wise to destroy it immediately, regardless of the powers it may offer!

A complete list of lich-enhanced spells and their descriptions are in the DM's Appendix at the back of this guide. Also included are a number of new magical spells and items created especially for the lich in the RAVENLOFT® campaign environment. If the DM can create specialty items specific to a lich or campaign, so much the better, but player characters should *not* be allowed to acquire and keep them in general.



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A

And the monster comes out,
out,
And the bodies come up,
up,
And evil goes forth,
forth,
And eyes glow brighter,
brighter,
Until no one stands mightier,
mightier. . . .

—“The Magic Man,” a child’s play
poem about monsters

As my scout Markil’s statement illustrates, there are distinctive characteristics that may alert you to a lich’s presence or influence:

“I’m lyin’ on the ground, recoverin’ from a few scrapes, when our camp is attacked by a bunch of skeletons. What makes these stiffs so alarmin’ to me is the small red points of light in their eye sockets, which Dr. Van Richten had mentioned. Luckily, we’re on our guard and to arms before they can penetrate camp. The fight’s pitched, but not too much; we’re pretty handy at dustin’ stiffs of all kinds.

“Durin’ the scuffle, Belinderissa decapitates one of the skeletons and its head rolls near me, so I pick it up and look into the eyes, to check out those mysterious red flames. I’m starin’ right into the eye holes of the thing, when all of a sudden the fire in those sockets starts to burn right into me! I mean, all of a sudden I’m dunked into a terror so mind-numbing, I nearly black out!

“So I heave the skull away from me, but the time I stared into those eyes is a lot longer than I remember—and all that time I’m walkin’ punch-drunklike through a rush of brain-crushin’ images I can’t control.

*“Next thing I know, the battle is over. My head finally clears and I look at my companions.
“ ‘The lich is behind this attack,’ I tell Van Richten.
‘We got to be real close!’ ”*

These lands hold so many evil powers of so many varieties, and each with such different

goals, that it’s nearly impossible to explain all the events that unfold around us. However, when one is on the hunt for a specific monster, it is possible to identify tell-tale patterns—especially as you draw near to your quarry.

Using Minions to Your Advantage

It must be remembered that a lich rarely acts on its own behalf in matters of defense. A lich is the general who formulates the master plans from the rear lines. Its undead soldiers hold the front, capture prizes, and kill (or kidnap) the unsuspecting “enemy” during the night.

A key to recognizing a lich, then, is to understand how it uses its minions, and to recognize a lich minion when you see it. As the example to the left points out, it is possible to spot a lich minion by unusual traits. Markil had battled with many animated skeletons before—indeed, as undead minions, skeletons are most common. But Markil, sharp lad, immediately noted their eyes. (I, too, was recuperating when the skeletons attacked, and remained too weak to participate in the skirmish.)

The eyes of many undead glow with eerie power, but I hypothesize that the eyes of lich minions glow with an intensity that exactly matches that of their master. I have not proved it, but I suspect that liches’ eyes glow with a singularity that is as identifiable as a fingerprint. I had imparted this suspicion to my hunting party, and Markil was attempting to verify the origins of these skeletons. Unfortunately, he was unprepared for the consequences; we were fortunate not to have lost him.

Let Markil’s lesson be one to all: If you see something that is unusual, *point it out to your comrades!* Any information can be useful—or essential—in identifying the source of an undead creature, and keeping suspicions to one’s self may deny one’s friends the opportunity to save his life.

And do not be too quick to scrutinize that which you suspect or discover, for the lich

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quickly makes corpses of the impetuous! For example, as Markil's report also attests, peering into the eyes of a lich minion may result in an attack of some ghastly mesmerism that plays havoc with one's senses and one's attachment to reality. The effects of this attack may be varied in the extreme, from mild dizziness in one instance to requiring critical assistance in another. I am uncertain as to how to wholly avoid such contact in combat, yet at the same time it is often difficult to achieve certainty of lich control without experiencing the effects.

Lich minions are treated as creatures with a gaze attack; the rules for such combat are found in the *DMG*. Characters who fall victim to a gaze attack must make a fear check (see the *RAVENLOFT*® boxed set). On a natural roll of 1, the character becomes comatose for 1d4 days. Optionally, the DM may require a horror check upon waking.

The lich is quite able to enforce its will upon even highly intelligent forms of undead, which leads me to another point of consideration: I have invoked military jargon to draw an analogy, but I suspect that a lich actually may use a system of organization not unlike modern armies, with subordinate commanders leading individual groups. Thus, by destroying an important undead minion, the lich might not be able to substantively control the others. Depending upon the situation, attacks might be directed at that particular undead in the hope of disrupting the lich's control over other minions.

Using the power to control undead described in Chapter II, the lich may appoint lieutenants from its intelligent minions and put them in command by instructing lesser undead to "follow the orders of *this* creature" (or some similar, simple directive).

If the lieutenant is destroyed when the undead army is beyond the lich's radius of control, then all subordinate undead become unguided and behave normally.

Recognizing a Lich

If it wishes to reveal itself, there is no mistaking a lich. If you have ever seen one undisguised before (and lived), you surely will recognize another instantly (and it will probably be the last thing you ever recognize—few escape that deadly grasp twice). As a solitary creature, a lich generally takes little trouble to mask its appearance. Thus, the lich in its lair is not the subject of this particular discussion because once you have found the lair, you almost surely have found the lich as well.

It is in the case of the disguised lich that a hunter must be on his guard. In most cases, the eternal quest for power is bound to force the lich into some contact with the outside world. Also, there are some liches who take an active role in the affairs of the living, seeking to manipulate the balances of power to their own ends or even manipulating the living for their own sakes. Either way, many liches eventually will deal with living people.

In such cases, the undead wizard may assume a guise of charisma and benign appearance. On the other hand, I know of a case where a lich disguised itself as a destitute beggar and thus gained entrance to a heavily-guarded temple where a holy artifact was *thought* to have been sufficiently protected. The lich is able to disguise itself almost perfectly, no matter what the facade. It is undead and therefore resistant to the magical prying of detection spells and abilities. Furthermore, with the aid of cosmetic spells and magical items, it can assume a completely convincing appearance of any mortal. Oh yes, there are a few magical spells that enable the caster to see through a magical mask, but be warned that the lich will guard against such intrusion. I know of one lich that was able to change its shape so effectively that, in effect, it actually became the creature it mimicked. Such a monster would be impossible to detect through most means, magical or otherwise.

The key to foiling the lich is, once again,

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knowledge. If one knows that a lich walks among mortals, if one knows what a lich seeks, if one knows what poses a threat to a lich's plots, then it is possible to spot the disguised creature, possibly through tell-tale behavior inconsistencies or through a process of elimination. Remember that a part of the knowledge equation is what the lich knows, too. In other words, what the lich *doesn't* know, or what the lich knows that you know, or endless combinations of both factors can come into play. The lich is a monster of genius intelligence; knowledge is its best weapon, but so is knowledge the best weapon against it.

Some priests of extreme piety and ability are able to force the undead away from them, including lichs. The presentation of a holy symbol by a powerful priest may be the only sure confirmation of a lich's presence, but be warned that lichs can resist the effects of such an attack. A foiled attempt may put the hunter off the scent, discredit him, or worse: it may alert the lich to the hunter's knowledge. For this reason, I would warn the hunter to reserve this means of discovering his enemy until he either has no choice or no doubts.

DMs are encouraged to be creative in disguising a lich. Remember that these monsters are ultra-powerful wizards who are constantly experimenting with the bounds of magic. While no lich should ever become magically omnipotent, one might create numerous magical items and spells to defy detection and confuse player characters.

Gathering Intelligence

As I have read accounts from lone survivors and witnesses of battles with lichs, one thing has occurred to me again and again, and I shall make the same point again and again: *It is absolutely essential to gather as much information as possible about the lich before battle.* In every case I have reviewed, the group was surprised by a magical attack or trap for which they had no defense. They thought they

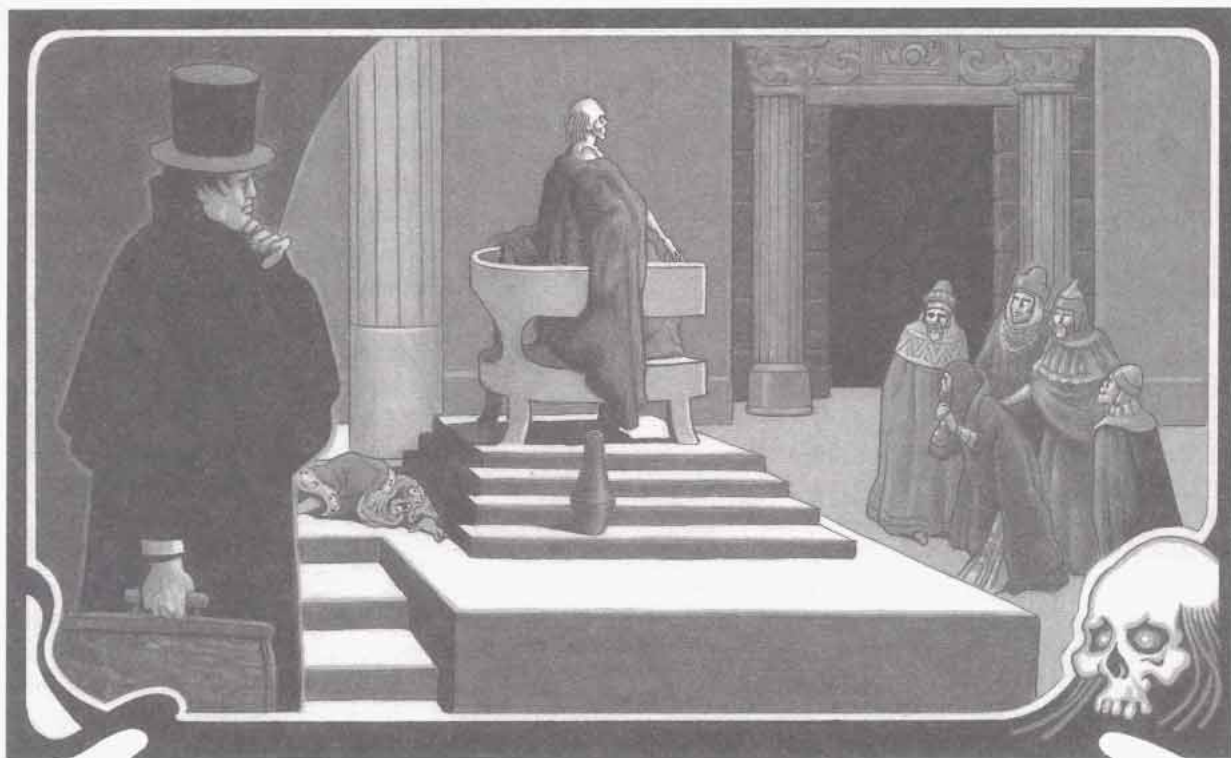
had prepared for any onslaught, but they always overlooked *something*, which proved to be their downfall. Although I cannot say that they would have been otherwise successful, I can still point out that too many have died through a lack of research and preparation. I may also boast that I have seen *two* successful lich kills, thanks to exhaustive groundwork.

Unfortunately, there are few ways to observe a lich with one's own eyes without fighting it. Obviously, the best way to do so is extremely surreptitiously: If a lich is within its lair and you must observe it, then you might introduce some sort of spy. A method I would suggest is to trick the lich into accepting a magical device which has some sort of clairvoyant magic attached to it. Since lichs rarely leave their lairs if they can help it, there is a good chance that a minion will retrieve the item and, thus, ignorantly lead a hunting party to its master's front door. This spy device also may yield a brief glimpse into the lich's inner sanctum, and yield a possible route of travel through the lich's lair. You must be prepared to identify the lich's surroundings quickly, though, for the lich is sure to examine the item, identify its treachery, and neutralize it immediately.

As with all plans, there are bound to be some drawbacks in introducing a spy (or spy device) to the lich's lair. First, it alerts the lich to your intentions. Second, the lich may guess your plan and mislead you. Third, as the passage from my journal on the following page attests, such tricks may bring doom upon some or all of the party. Finally, the lich's lair is the *last* place one wants to meet with a lich. Far better is it to lure the lich out of its deadly haven.

Efforts to defeat a lich within its lair have never succeeded, to my knowledge. In every case, the hunters have succeeded only in driving the lich from its lair. I, myself, have had a hand in the destruction of but two such creatures, a fraction of my general success rate, even with vampires, (and in only *one* case was I able to locate and destroy the phylactery), but in both cases I confronted the monster outside of its abode.

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Lich Bait

Belinderissa was stout of heart and more than dedicated to the task of necromantic cleansing, but her seething hatred of undead made her as dangerous to herself as to them. Therefore, I took the precaution of planting a tracking device upon her person when we began our hunt for the Bloody Hand of Souragne. It was but a brooch with some magical identification abilities, but I told her—and let it be generally known—that the jewelry had some power of revealing the past of objects that it touched. I suggested that Belinderissa might use it to tell if the lich had been in contact with this object or that place, so I could truthfully call it a “tracking device” without offending her pride. What made the brooch important was that I had engraved it with my personal mark, and that I had a ring that would point the way to any object so identified.

Little did I suspect that the Bloody Hand would hear of and come to crave such a device,

although I might have guessed as much, had I thought about it. It grievously pains me to remember that Belinderissa was taken and murdered for that relatively useless bauble, yet we were thence able to track the lich through the labyrinthine swamps, prevent it from reaching its safehouse, and ultimately exact our revenge upon it. . . .

—From the personal journal of Dr. Van Richten

I’m afraid I have few answers with which to console and edify the lich hunter when he asks how best to defeat a lich. Destroying one of these cursed beasts is an act of such great significance that it pains me to think of a parallel. The simple answer is to attack the monster with a lightning offense, hope to catch it off guard, and pray for a pound of luck! The more difficult answer is that the lich must first be drawn from its lair. One would not try to conquer an army ensconced in a fortress; rest assured, the lich is an army in itself, and its fortress is much more than thick stone walls!

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Depending on the lich, it can be quite easy to lure one out. The easiest method is to defeat a large number of servitor undead. Since the lich is able to see through its servitors' eyes, it can identify the mortals and make attempts to track them down with more powerful undead.

This strategy has two beneficial yields: First, it reduces the pool of soldiers at the lich's command. Second, and more importantly, it may encourage the lich to take the battle into its own hands, thus forcing it to abandon the safety of its lair. Perceptive strategists may argue that the lich would foresee this tactic and foil it, but I offer this counter-strategy: If the lich attacks the offending mortals personally, it can choose the time and place of the attack, gaining an advantage of surprise. Leaving the lair also prevents mortals from learning its exact location. Should the lich be destroyed during the combat, its soul will return to its phylactery, which is more likely than not secured within the darkest recesses of its lair.

There is another method I know of luring the lich from its lair, yet I hesitate to offer it, for it has resulted in the death of a friend. As the above passage from my journal ironically illustrates, the lich may be drawn out of hiding with the promise of magic. If you have something that the lich wants, there's a good chance that it will come to you. Of course, it's not good enough to walk the streets, shouting, "I've got a very powerful magical item!" The lich is no fool. This ruse worked against the Bloody Hand of Souragne because I, in effect, did not know that I had baited the hook. We were all ignorant of the impending result of my white lie, and so the lich detected no trap.

Can the bait be successfully presented? I believe so, although I have never been able to do so; lichs always seem to know, or find out, when you are spreading false information. But take warning: if you *do* convince a lich that you have something it wants, you may well be courting the fate of Belinderissa.

In the Lair

It's unfortunate, but it should come as no surprise that most hunters will eventually be compelled to enter the lair of the lich. Doing so enables a hunting party to test the lich's defenses and learn more about its tactics. With luck, the party may find a clue to the former identity of the monster—a powerful weapon.

The lich will attack with certain fervor if mortals enter its lair and approach its person, and it will very rarely flee its lair without offering mortal combat to anyone who enters and defeats the safeguards and traps. One can look always forward to a stand-up (albeit magically intensive) fight with a lich, but within the lair it is even more true. Remember that the habitation is little more than a fortress designed to repel attack of any kind. There will be numerous traps, both physical and magical, around every corner. Faced with this onslaught of artifacts, spells, traps, and innate abilities, I'm afraid that many groups of brave warriors, mages, and priests are defeated all too easily.

For those parties who discover the location of a lich's lair, I suggest short reconnaissance missions that probe bit by bit, further and further, into the dwelling. Upon any indication that the lich is aware of your presence, ignore all previous findings.

Never, NEVER challenge the lich if you should stumble across it within its home. Collapse the roof, invoke a magical wall, summon minions of your own to hold it off, but whatever else you do, RUN!

Death for the Undead

A lich's body is merely a corrupted, decrepit, temporary vessel for its soul. Destroying its body merely releases its soul to its true resting place: the phylactery.

The phylactery is amulet-sized and shaped. It is typically made of heavy metals or stone and is highly ornate. I have already elaborated upon phylacteries in this text, but I have painfully little information about them. For all I know,

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the pendant I wear around my neck—a trophy from the hoard of the Bloody Hand—might be a phylactery, and the lich within is waiting for me to die so that it might occupy my body.

Generally, the lich is able to attempt to take possession of a body from the phylactery, but only upon corpses. Such a body must lie within 60 feet of the phylactery for the lich's essence to reach it. There is no limit to the amount of time that the lich may remain within the phylactery. For example, an unsuspecting person might claim the amulet and pass it through multiple generations of his family before it finally gains an opportunity to take possession of a dead body. However, the target body must remain within range of the phylactery for a full day, during which time the lich locates it, deems it suitable for habitation, and performs its ritual of transpossession.

To make the transfer, the lich conducts a sort of attack against the body. The lich may attempt the transfer only once per corpse. The corpse is allowed a saving throw vs. death magic at the same level as if it were alive. If the corpse is unsuccessful, the lich inhabits the body and is fully restored to its normal Hit Die level of ability.

The lich can also attempt to take over undead creatures. Such creatures make a saving throw vs. death magic with a +3 bonus. Failure indicates the undead creature's life energy is overtaken by the lich's life force, and the undead essentially ceases to exist.

As always, DMs are encouraged to create variations of the rules so that players cannot use them to their advantage. Some possibilities are: the lich can cast *magic jar* from the phylactery, thus possessing a living character's body and either killing him or trapping him within the phylactery until the lich can perform a power ritual; the range of the lich's ability to possess a dead body is extended or unlimited; touching the phylactery without casting *dispel magic* results in instant transpossession, either with the character who touched it or a random person in the room; and so on.

Destroying the Phylactery

This I do know: The only way to destroy a lich completely and irrevocably is to destroy its phylactery.

The lich is trapped in a curious predicament in the storing of its phylactery. If its body is destroyed, the spirit instantly becomes trapped (or secured) within the amulet and will remain there until it is able to secure another body. If the lich hides the phylactery where it can *never* be discovered, then it risks eternal imprisonment. It is, therefore, in the lich's interest to put the phylactery where it could potentially encounter a body to inhabit; the hiding place should be accessible at least to its minion undead, who can provide host bodies. On the other hand, if the creature selects a place where the phylactery might be found, the lich runs a terrible risk of it being discovered and destroyed.

My opinion is that the phylactery will always remain within relatively easy reach for the lich. If one has a treasure of inexpressible value, the compulsion to keep it near at hand is almost irresistible. There may be a solid wall and a dozen traps between the phylactery and the rest of the lich's lair, but it *will* be there, I'm certain.

Destruction of the phylactery is not a simple matter, either. The amulet itself will be protected with various magics that prevent its destruction by common, physical means—one cannot simply grasp the vessel and smash it against a rock. It is made of sturdy materials that naturally resist damage, and upon it are laid enchantments that make fairly permanent its existence. When properly constructed, the phylactery is nearly impossible to destroy with simple physical might.

Perhaps only a mage with the ability to undo a multitude of enchantments is able to destroy a phylactery. Then again, I would not underestimate the power of the priesthood in such matters. Such talent and power are difficult to find, yet the same magical might should be present to battle the lich in the first place.

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Here is a basic scenario for the destruction of a phylactery: First, the *permanency* spell must be reversed and cast to make the amulet vulnerable to destruction. Next, a mage or priest must cast *dispel magic* directly upon the amulet. Doing so will not alter the amulet's ability to contain the lich's soul, but it will, for 1d4 rounds, make it possible to breach the amulet. At this point, 25 points of physical damage will crush the amulet, releasing the lich's spirit into the ether, forever dispersed and ineffective. For the purposes of determining the success of the *dispel magic*, assume that the lich is at the 18th level of experience.

Other possibilities are: Any blunt weapon of +3 enchantment or better can harm the amulet; the amulet *cannot* be destroyed—it must be *blessed* and buried in a hallowed grave, forever trapping the lich within; and so forth.

Ramifications of Lich Destruction

When a phylactery is destroyed, there is a vacuum of power created that may have various effects. The most hopeful outcome is that the evil will dissipate and those creatures and objects under the lich's control will become either free or inert. However, if another lich or other powerful being resides nearby, it may simply step into the place left behind.

Rival beings aside, a primary concern to those who have defeated a lich, found the phylactery within its lair, and destroyed it, is the fact that a majority of the lair, if not the entire lair, may well be dependent upon lich magic for structural integrity—persons within such lairs should keep at hand provisions for surviving the imminent collapse.

Even if the victorious group is not in such a lair, then they still must deal with surviving minions. These servitors, now completely uncontrolled, will revert to their normal behavior. This is a situation can be nearly as bad as when the lich was in direct control, for the undead creature's hunger for living flesh and souls is well known. Fortunately, servitor

undead are largely drawn from less sophisticated undead, those generally without a great deal of innate mental capacity. Therefore, their attacks will be undirected, uncoordinated, and drastically less effective compared to cases where they are guided by a higher authority.

In any event, the destruction of a phylactery should send shock waves through the domain, if not the entire demiplane. This presents an opportunity to introduce new villains, destroy the lich's hoard, and give the player characters a sense of a spectacular accomplishment.

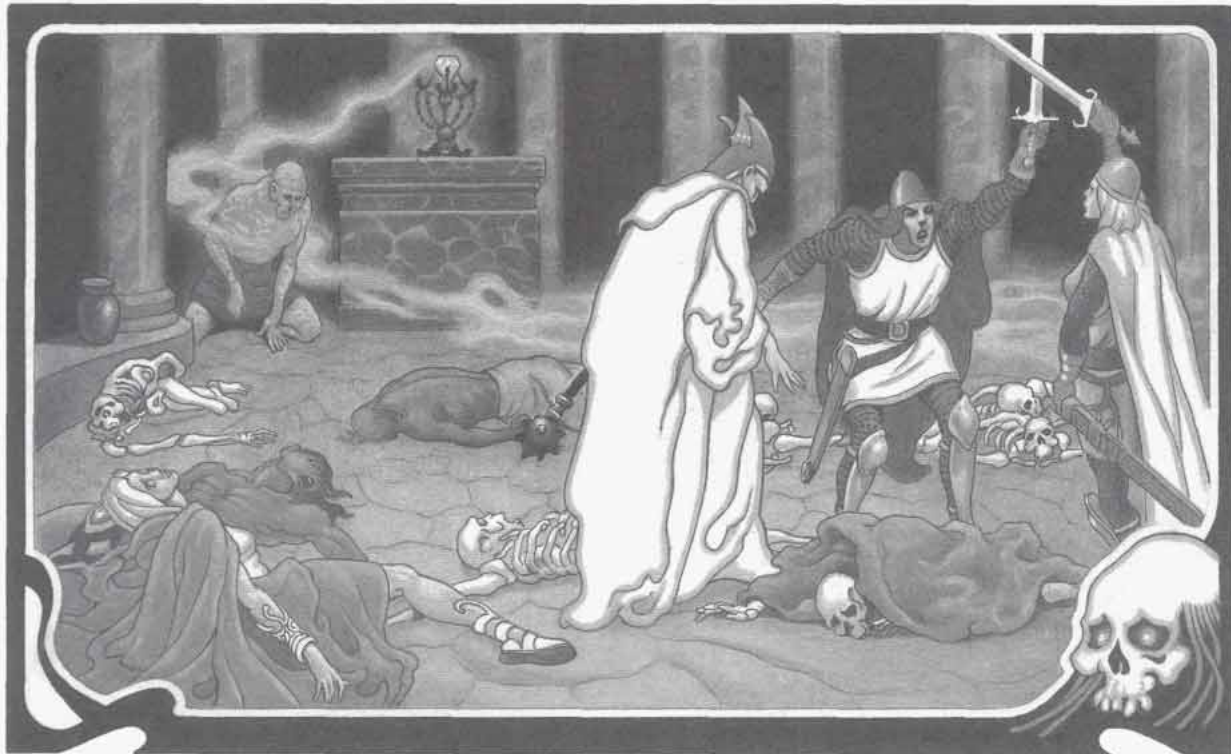
The Mystical Hoard

The extreme wealth a lich bequeaths to victors is both a fantastic asset and perhaps the most dangerous cargo possible for people to bear. The sum of a lich's vault can propel a mortal to wondrous status overnight. With so many items, information, and raw power at a person's command, there is little that would not be possible. However, making productive use of such a cache is difficult at best. Possession of even a single object from a lich's lair may draw the attention of unscrupulous mortals bent on securing power for themselves—regardless of the source—and of powerful undead as well, especially other liches.

In some environments, liches are known to wage open war against each other. If one of them dies, the others are sure to become aware of it within a matter of seconds. (I suspect that each of the other liches have a variety of spells that will alert them of any change in the balance of power.) If knowledge of the demise of a lich is widely known, other liches will hunt any prize that they were unable to gather when it was first discovered. In the eyes of an evil creature, taking a coveted item from even a powerful hero is much easier (and likely more appealing) than taking it from a lich. Considering the power of even a common lich, the sentiment is understandable.

And remember that it is far more simple, relatively speaking, to defeat a lich than it is to

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destroy one. A hero who satisfies himself with the acquisition of a lich hoard, without wholly destroying its owner, is taking a terrible risk! Liches have formidable memories, and they will exterminate one's children's children's children to retrieve what has been taken from them.

I would suggest that the only act which would ensure that mortals are no longer troubled is to destroy every object they encounter and return to their homes in peace and without the fear of retribution or ambush. Devices held within such lairs are the products of evil. They were forged by black fires, crafted with dead hands, and enchanted with arcane necromancy. They should be destroyed, for they were not ever meant to be used by mortal hands.

At the DM's option, every (or nearly every) object found within a lair may be considered to be cursed. The use of such items may result in reversed effects, the summoning of a powerful, evil being, or a Ravenloft powers check (perhaps at double the normal chance of failing).

Purification

The efforts of the undead are as a boil upon the land: It must be removed if the rightful owners—the living mortals—are ever to enjoy to the peace they deserve. I strenuously recommend the destruction of *all* of the lich's enchantments, including its alchemical notes. Even that will leave us with a lair that may tempt other creatures of evil to inhabit it, to re-stoke the cold fires within and establish a base camp like a recurring malignant growth. It is best to convert the lair, if possible, to uses that are beneficial to humanity. Hence I say that the responsible lich hunter will notify the local authorities and the local priesthood of the vacancy, as well as the status of the phylactery.

But the stench is thick amongst temples of evil, and they are not easily cleansed. Barring a conversion to more a useful state, the best course of action is to completely reduce the lair to dust, to seal it from intrusion for all eternity.

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I have compared the lich to a general who commands his forces from the rear lines. Continuing the analogy, mindless undead are the foot soldiers and intelligent undead are the lieutenants. In this chapter, I will discuss what might be compared to the general's majors, colonels, and his aides-de-camp. They are undead peculiar to the legions of the lich because they are the products of the powerful black magic that only a lich can wield.

Specifically, I am referring to the magically-endowed undead creature, which I have named the *quasimancer*, to the fallen wizard, which I have called the *vassalich*, and to the abominable *lich familiar*. These are servants who, to a smaller degree, mimic their master's deadly combination of magic use and undead status. Their special powers raise them above the ranks of common minions, yet the superiority they enjoy is little to rejoice in, even if they possess the free will to do so. They are pitiable creatures, miserable wretches who serve an evil master, mere battle fodder to an amoral commander who knows no shortage of replacement troops.

The extent to which these monsters pose a threat is variable. Taken by themselves, they offer a mildly dangerous combat adversary, certainly nothing beyond the skills of most seasoned adventurers. Yet each of them serves the lich in a special capacity that can geometrically multiply the master's effectiveness: These underlings can perform functions that hitherto required the presence of the lich itself. With the emergence of these creatures, the lich can remain safely out of harm's reach and thus conduct even more complex and wicked schemes. To the lich hunter, these minions represent yet another ring of defense to penetrate, and another depletion of precious strength and magic.

Quasimancers

The lich's ability to manipulate the dead comes so naturally that it should be no surprise if the lich were to improve upon the method. Unlike a priest, whose puissance waxes and wanes with his favor in the eyes of the gods, the wizard generates his *own* magic and manipulates matter in a way that could be called, for the purposes of this comparison, scientific. Therefore, the lich is limited only by the scope of its research. In other words, the lich only need practice more powerful sorcery in order to create more powerful undead, and garnering more potent magic is about as natural an act as a lich can manage.

I wish that I had come to this conclusion myself—it seems so obvious—but it was my prized scout Markil who put me on to it during our hunt of the lich called the Bloody Hand:

"First a pack of zombies comes pilin' through the hedges—no problem; we pound 'em into dust. Then some ghouls come draggin' behind—pretty smelly, but again no big issue; we hold our breath, and we burn 'em down. 'Course they all have the red-eye, but we know how deal with that, thanks to you, Van Richten. I, myself, like to look a stiff in the bread-box when I take it out.

"Then what I think is another ghoul comes into view and just stands there, lookin' at us. I finish off my last stiff and head for it, when I hear it whisperin' and see it wavin' its hands at me. Well, I never saw any stiff weaker than a vampire throw a spell, but I know what I'm lookin' at, so I yell 'duck' and then do the same. It's a damn good thing too, Doc.

"Sure enough, the stiff dumps a fireball into the party!

"To make a long story short, we focused on dustin' the magic cadaver, then we headed back here to tell you what happened."

It was not long before we encountered more of the Bloody Hand's special minions and I was given the opportunity to observe them myself. They introduced a new complication to our

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hunt, forcing us to change our combat strategy, advance even more cautiously, and rest even more often. Meanwhile, the Bloody Hand was absent from the war, taking advantage of our delays to advance its agenda elsewhere.

Despite those setbacks, I made good use of the spare time and studied these magic-using undead minions with an educated eye. Based on my observations, and the collective opinion of a dozen sages, I have some valuable information to impart to the reader regarding these creatures I call *quasimancers*.

Let us begin with two basic prerequisites. First, the use of wizard magic apparently requires some force of will. It is not enough to simply comprehend the workings of a spell; one must have the determination to drive magical forces to a desired end. Therefore, a candidate for quasimancer must retain at least part of its former life essence—its personality, if you will—in order to use magic. Second, the casting of magic almost always demands the use of the hands and other body parts in order to shape the spell. Therefore, a quasimancer must have a physical body, possessed of at least some dexterity, as well.

Mummies, vampires, and liches satisfy both prerequisites, but both mummies and vampires are difficult to control, even for a lich. (I do not believe that it is even possible for one lich to control another.) Also, both vampires and liches are already capable of wielding magic, so endowing them with spell abilities would be redundant.

I conclude, then, that the lich raises a special form of wight to serve as a quasimancer. The minion retains a small part of its former identity, and one freshly animated still maintains a viable physique for spellcasting. Furthermore, such a creature would be subject to the same absolute lich control exerted upon its lesser cousins, yet its orders from the “general” would include the use of offensive magic. To support my hypothesis, I have observed that quasimancers exhibit hand-to-hand combat techniques and other innate abilities common to the wight.

Let me caution the reader not to take this text too literally, here or anywhere. The ghost also satisfies the prerequisites for a quasimancer. Perhaps the lich can endow even the lowly skeleton with the ability to cast magic. Then again, perhaps such magic is not possible. Whatever the case, we cannot rest upon absolutes, for liches are making new breakthroughs in spell research even as I write this guide, and even as you read it. . . .

A quasimancer can command a company of skeletons and zombies, send them into a fray, and then saturate the area with highly destructive magic, obliterating its own troops and even itself. Indeed, one should not expect a quasimancer to stand aloof from the battle or the rest of the undead as a mage would, for it carries no expectations of survival into battle. The monster has no concerns for its underlings or for itself, so it makes an ideal leader of a suicide squadron. And because it outwardly appears to be no more than a common ghoul or wight, its actions may not always be noted or anticipated until too late, and so it is all the more deadly.

I have no positive suppositions to contribute to this matter, except perhaps that the knowledge of the quasimancer's existence should be enough to keep the hunter of undead monsters on his constant guard. If these minions encourage the reader to be ever vigilant, ever ready to face the unexpected, then even quasimancers have a good side . . . insignificant as it is.

As always, the DM is free to vary the origins and powers of the quasimancer, but here are some guidelines:

The quasimancer is specially raised by the lich and then magically endowed (see the spells *create minion* and *confer* in the DM Appendix). After it is successfully raised, it is allowed a saving throw to avoid being automatically controlled as are other undead of less than half the lich's Hit Dice (see Chapter II). This saving throw is allowed because of the artificial intelligence enhancement afforded

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during the creation of the quasimancer. If the roll succeeds and the minion is somehow able to escape the lich, it can be an opponent worthy of full NPC status for as long as the *create minion* spell lasts. (A clever creature might attempt to get a *permanency* spell cast upon it, thus negating the expiration of the spell.) At the DM's option, the quasimancer may reroll the saving throw for control once per week or more.

Quasimancers can enjoy the stats and abilities of their common cousins (see the *Monstrous Compendium*) with the following additional qualities, due to being the minion of a lich: They make all saving throws at the level of the lich who controls them; they are immune to *enfeeblement*, *polymorph*, *electricity*, *insanity*, *charm*, *sleep*, *cold*, and *death* spells; they exude a *fear aura*, 5-foot radius, requiring a successful save vs. spell or flee for 2d4 rounds.

Vassaliches

I *was the most terrible thing I have ever seen, Dolf! No! Not the most terrible—the dreams it put into my head when I could no longer stay awake . . . when I put my wife's hand into a—No! I didn't do that! I didn't do that! Don't look at me!"*

"It was the lich that put those thoughts in your head, Harmon. Let them go, they are not yours!" I cajoled him, realizing that his reason would not remain much longer. "Tell me about the minions. You were talking about the lich's minions, remember?"

"Yes, yes! It was horrid, horrid! Not just dead things—living things too: Men! A man became a lich before my eyes! He swallowed a stone—a diamond or something, I don't know. Then the lich . . . slit its rotted wrist open with its own fingernail and blood—no, not blood—ooze, gray ooze ran from the black hole!"

". . . And the man drank it! He drank the lich's—blood! He drank it, Dolf! And he fell down

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and screamed. And he changed. He shrivelled. He died! He lay there . . . dead . . . and . . ."

"And what, Harmon?"

"He got up, and he spit up the stone, into the lich's hand, and then he was a lich, too. . . !"

—Notes from the night
Harmon Ruscheider died

I have never met a creature like the one Dr. Ruscheider described on that evening when he came to me like a crazed animal beneath the full moon, but I have little doubt that they exist. There is so much evil around us, and there are so many exposed to temptations proffered by agents of that evil. It is sadly simple to conclude that a wizard of questionable values might strike a pact with a lich and become immortal, albeit undead. What mage does not crave the arcane secrets of the universe? What wizard would not consider the advantages of unlimited time to learn new magic? Who among *any* of us does not wish to live forever?

These sentiments are the genesis of the *vassalich*: a wizard who undergoes the transformation to lichdom under the sponsorship of a full lich, thus becoming an undead magic-user long before he could accomplish the feat himself. Such foolish mages are free-willed individuals who are yet slaves. They are capable of independent thought, abstract strategy, self-conducted research, and all intellectual processes available to a living man, but they have committed themselves to eternal bondage for a master who inevitably will use them as nothing more than another means to its own ends.

As people who are more intelligent than the average, mages should know the consequences of entering into such a relationship, or so I would assume. This may well be why I have never met one; they are extremely uncommon. Even so, I have shared Harmon Ruscheider's remarks with a few scholarly wizards, and I have made the following speculations upon the nature of the *vassalich*.

Necrology

I would venture to guess that nearly all *vassaliches* were living students of the wizardly college of necromancy. A preoccupation with or sheer ambivalence toward death would certainly render the prospect of becoming undead less daunting. Hence, it may be expected that most *vassaliches* will wield death magic as a specialist of that dark school of necromancy.

Vassaliches most likely undergo a process similar to their master's when they become undead. They may drink a poisonous potion, or they may even partake of the lich's body fluid as Ruscheider suggested, but they then occupy a phylactery. Ruscheider's story also implied that the phylactery is given over to the lich, who presumably keeps it as the perfect instrument of leverage over its new minion. Thus, the lich has an absolutely loyal servant in complete control of sophisticated mental faculties. As long as the phylactery remains in the lich's possession, the *vassalich* must perforce do its sponsor's bidding.

Quick-thinking hunters will consider this: He who holds the phylactery of a lich, be it a *vassal* or otherwise, controls the lich! Furthermore, the phylactery of a *vassalich* may not be subject to the same security standards as the master's. A captured phylactery of a *vassalich* may be one of the deadliest weapons that a lich hunter could ever hope to wield . . . !

Vassaliches ideally are much rarer than liches; such slaves are bound to be more than a handful, and they are sure to draw undue attention as well—something few liches desire. For DMs who wish to role-play the creation of a *vassalich*, a number of conditions might be created to carry off a successful transformation.

For example, the wizard must fail at least two Ravenloft powers checks before the transformation will work. Perhaps the phylactery must be a gem of not less than 10,000 gp value, which the lich can wear ornamentally or keep with the rest of its

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treasure. Perhaps the new vassalich must rest after the conversion, like its master, but for ten full days.

The transformation, itself, might consist of joint spellcasting by the sponsor and the aspirant. Perhaps the lich casts *enchant an item* on the phylactery while the wizard drinks the prepared potion (see Chapter I), then the wizard casts *magic jar* before he dies. Next, the lich casts *reincarnation* and the vassalich is created.

The vassalich's phylactery would likely not be nearly as magical as that of the lich. It might be destroyed merely by an unenchanted weapon inflicting 25 points of damage upon it (saving throw vs. magical attacks apply).

Powers

Wizards who become vassaliches probably gain their master's black aura to some extent, and they probably share its resistance to holy symbols and the same types of magic, but they surely must lack their master's experience and level of magical power. I suspect that vassaliches remain largely the same as they were in life, in terms of spellcasting ability. If there is any such gain upon transformation, then it must be paid for with the loss of endurance, mobility, or strength.

Vassaliches are reincarnated as monsters with HD equal to half (round down) of their former experience level, but they retain their former spellcasting abilities. They gain 1 HD every 10 years, which is equal to two experience levels in terms of spellcasting abilities, and they may become a full lich upon reaching 11 HD. However, they must first gain control of their phylactery and then follow all normal procedures for becoming a lich.

Vassaliches can be hit by unenchanted weapons, but they remain immune to *charm*, *sleep*, *enfeeblement*, *polymorph*, *cold*, *electricity*, *insanity*, and *death* spells. They are turned as liches. Of course, they can make the gaze attack that all lich minions enjoy (see Chapter VI). They also exude a fear aura with a 5-foot

radius; save vs. spell or flee for 2d4 rounds. Finally, they possess a chill touch for 1d4 points of damage; save vs. paralysis or behave as if *slowed* for 1d10 rounds.

It is suggested that characters who have never seen a vassalich be required to make a horror check upon an encounter, unless they have had at least two previous encounters with a lich.

Psychology

The mind of a vassalich is sure to be an incredibly complex thing. They retain their memories and forces of personality after their transformation, which must mean that they continue to harbor within their breasts the same intense ambition that drove them to pursue vassalichdom in the first place. How it must grate upon them to become the absolute slave of another! No doubt, a candidate for transformation is absolutely loyal to the sponsor lich while he courts immortality, but once the deed is done, how long is it before the intelligent minion comes to resent his bond?

This line of reasoning leads me to two conjectures about these lesser liches: First, they may be more dangerous to the world while they are still mortals, for they can act as spies and thieves for the monster whom they wish to please. While they remain living men, they are capable of much more insidious and far-reaching damage, for who would guess at the ghastly station to which they aspire and realize that they are already minions of the lich? Second, they may be more dangerous to the lich when they are no longer mortals, for such ambitious creatures are sure to plot against the one who holds their phylacteries. After the transformation, egotism and ambition, to say nothing of basically evil character, quite likely estranges them from their masters. As long as the lich has their very life essence in its keeping, vassaliches' existences hang upon the whim of an evil persona; I think that I can safely venture to say that such an arrangement cannot be tolerable.

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While I have little advice to offer regarding living spies, I think that it may be possible for a clever hunter to poison the relationship between the lich and his vassal. The trick is to establish an alliance with the vassalich, and to do it without the lich's knowledge. The vassal is sure to be nervous about such an arrangement—after all, its master will crush its phylactery at the first hint of rebellion—but there is more than enough incentive to turn against the lich, and that is one fact upon which a lich hunter may almost certainly depend.

Many interesting adventure scenarios are possible with the inclusion of vassaliches. They may serve as nemeses to PCs who simply are not strong enough to deal with a true lich; in such cases, the lich may be busy in another realm while the vassalich runs the store or initiates exploits of its own. Vassaliches can be quite powerful, but never as much so as a true lich. Another adventure possibility lies in the seduction of a PC mage by a lich. Of course, it's expected that the mage will respond to the temptation only as a way to infiltrate the lich's defenses. If role-played well, the game of cat-and-mouse can be very exciting.

A PC may actually find himself forced by the lich, physically, magically, or otherwise, to undergo the transformation process as a result of role-playing. In this case, he becomes an NPC until his companions can destroy the vassalich's body, gain control of the lesser phylactery, clone the PC wizard (use of other bodies, alive or dead, may call for a powers check, depending on the circumstances), and cast both *magic jar* and *raise dead* or *resurrect* (apply all saving throws). A *wish* may be substituted for either spell.

On the other hand, there may be a few players who may attempt to role-play the transformation to vassalichdom. Any action to this end should result in a Ravenloft powers check, and any PC who actually goes through with the change immediately becomes an NPC.

Lich Familiars

There is but one priest of nature among the hunters of undead with whom I have traveled: Alanthir the half-breed elf. Until I met him, I believed that lawful priests of goodness were the stoutest foes of the walking dead, but this druid proved me wrong. Alanthir's utter condemnation of the unnatural state of living death was matched only by the ferocity he exhibited when he met one of them face to face. He wielded a magical scimitar that blazed like the sun in the faces of the undead, but often he actually cast it aside to tear skeletons literally limb from limb, reducing them to piles of bone with his rough, bare hands! Here, I thought, was the ultimate ally to my cause.

So I believed, until we met the lich Redfist's familiar—once a red-tailed hawk, but now a molting, rotted, batlike thing with a scream like an infuriated banshee. We first encountered it in the company of its master and were forced to flee for our lives, but Alanthir was choked with horror at the sight of the undead hawk, and he had to be dragged screaming from the battlefield. He became hopelessly obsessed with the bird—his eyes never left the heavens, and he muttered through every waking hour, complaining that “we must move quickly, quickly!”

When we had finally laid our deliberate plans for approaching the lich, Alanthir agreed to the strategy. Nevertheless, while we were still many miles from the suspected location of the lair, he espied the familiar circling high above, shifted his shape to that of a small bird before my very eyes, and darted into the sky before we could stop him! The undead hawk, apparently senseless of its master's will at the time, gave itself over to predatory instincts and gave Alanthir chase.

The druid could not hope to elude the hawk's talons, but he lured it into our midst before it snatched him in midair and they both tumbled to the ground in a death struggle. We immediately seized the opportunity and pounced upon the unnatural monster, even as it snapped

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Alannthir's neck. With similar speed, we released the creature from its gruesome existence, driving a silver dagger through its leathery breast.

It seemed to me that Alannthir breathed a sigh of joy as he regained his humanoid form and died, but it was utterly drowned beneath a long, hideous shriek of the Redfist, which echoed across the realm. . . .

—From the journal of Dr. Van Richten

Insofar as liches are wizards, it is reasonable that any number of them would have a familiar. Such a creature not only conveys special powers upon the lich, but it provides perhaps the only company that a lich will tolerate. The relationship between a mage and his familiar is quite intimate, but the lich's familiar may be the only friend it has in the entire universe.

On the other hand, the familiar of a lich must certainly be or become an evil thing. It may be that lich familiars endure an antagonistic tie to their masters and must be ruled with an iron fist. Perhaps these creatures rightly hate their masters, even more so because they cannot survive without the lich. This might explain why the Redfist's familiar chased Alannthir, putting both itself and its master at risk. I do not mean to suggest a familiar may be turned against the lich in the same manner as a vassalich. Rather, I think that some familiars may abandon their primary directives at crucial moments, heeding more basic instincts.

A wizard who has a familiar is faced with a dilemma when he contemplates lichdom: Perhaps his death may simply dissolve the bond between himself and his familiar, but it is quite possible that the separation adversely affects the mage. If upon the change he suffers a shock like that which mages experience upon the death of a familiar, the result could be absolute death. Therefore, I am inclined to believe that a lich will insist on taking his familiar into unlife with it, and that the familiar's life essence resides in the phylactery with its master.

However, I doubt that unliving immortality is acceptable to most natural creatures, even if

they are inextricably bound to a wizard. I would not be surprised if such a familiar actually rebelled in the face of this predicament. I do not wonder at Alannthir's rage over the Redfist's hawk; I'm sure the poor beast was thoroughly miserable.

As an aside, I see no reason why a lich could not call a familiar after its transformation, but I seriously doubt that any natural animal would answer its summons. Rather, the familiar of a lich would most likely be an undead thing itself.

A wizard can take its familiar with it into lichdom by forcing it to drink the potion of transformation. After doing so, the familiar makes a system shock roll at same level as the wizard: If it fails, the familiar dies and the lich must make a second system shock roll; if the roll fails, the lich dies irrevocably, just as if he had failed his first roll. If the roll succeeds, the lich still loses 1 point of Con permanently, and it must rest two full weeks before memorizing spells or conducting any strenuous activity.

Such a lich familiar actually resides in the phylactery with the lich. Therefore, it cannot be completely destroyed until the phylactery is destroyed, just like the lich.

For a lich-summoned familiar, the DM can consult any of the *Monstrous Compendiums* and choose a familiar appropriate to his or her campaign, or one may be randomly generated using the table provided below:

Lich Familiars Table

d20 Roll	Familiar (Enhancement)
1–5	Skeletal bat (hearing)
6–10	Dire wolf (smell)
11–15	Nightmare (speed)
16–17	Assassin imp (surprise bonus)
18–19	Necrophidius (silent movement)
20	DM's choice

Other candidates are darkenbeasts, berbelangs, mites, yeth hounds, gremlins, wichtlins, kani dolls, gurik cha'ahl, blood sea imps, eyewings, undead beasts (from the

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DRAGONLANCE® campaign world), cildabrins, orpsu, iron cobras, hell cats, and mephits. The lich may otherwise choose to create an undead version of virtually any monster by casting *raise dead* upon an expired monster of its choice and then binding it by casting *find familiar* and *charm monster*, or something to that effect.

In any event, a lich and its familiar exchange the same benefits enjoyed in all such bonds (see the wizard spell *find familiar*), with the following possible enhancements: the lich familiar's empathic link to its master is equal to the lich's Intelligence score in miles and naturally intelligent familiars can communicate telepathically with their masters.

As all liches in the RAVENLOFT® campaign environment are evil, so are their familiars, but a familiar's lawful or chaotic disposition can affect its relationship with its master. Chaotic evil familiars may abandon their master's commands and satisfy their basic instincts when out of range, and neutral evil familiars may rebel (10% base chance) against strongly lawful or chaotic instructions when out of range, but lawful evil familiars are always loyal. Natural animal familiars become neutral evil upon conversion to lichdom.

If a lich familiar's body is reduced to 0 hp, it must immediately roll for system shock at 85%. Failure indicates that the familiar is destroyed and the lich must then make a second system shock roll (same chance) to avoid its own destruction. If the roll is successful, the familiar returns to the safety of the phylactery and can inhabit another animal's corpse. If the familiar fails its roll but the lich succeeds, then the lich is deprived of spellcasting ability until it animates a new body for the familiar to inhabit.

Regardless of whether the familiar resides in the phylactery with its master or is a monster summoned after the transformation, the lich loses 1 point of Con permanently if its familiar is destroyed, just like living wizards.



VIII: THE MENTALIST LICH



M

*y mind to me a kingdom is;
Such present joys therein I find
That it excels all other bliss
The earth affords or grows by kind.
—Sir Edward Dyer*

*I will not be able to speak of my
experience in detail until I have put
to rest the terrible visions I have
suffered at the hands of Master
Ulathar the lich.*

*It has no remorse or regard for the
living—it barely took notice of us
during a combat that was for us
pitched and most dire. Only a fateful
twist of luck turned the encounter
from disaster to narrow victory. It
used its twisted powers of the mind
as freely as we breathe, and with an effect that I
had never conceived. Its mind was the blackest
pit of evil, and it reached out for us, twisting our
spirits and tainting us in mere seconds.*

*My will now has been purged of the evils
implanted in my mind. My spirit has been
blessed and redeemed by the highest priests. Yet
I cannot sleep at night, for even in the darkest
rooms or the brightest days, I still see the lich's
eyes boring into my mind like daggers of fire.
—From the personal journal of Matthew
Swiftsinger of Skald, in Kartakass*

Woe to the person who encounters a lich possessed of the secrets of the mind; who can, by hypnotic will alone, look into the depths of men's spirits. These beasts are like towers of iron fortitude, creating and driving their unlife not by magical means, but by the pure desire of their outstandingly evil will to continue, to enlarge their mental prowess, to stand upon the pinnacle of all that is human and to look beyond. The information about liches of these strange mesmeric abilities is very sparse. There are, however, some few threads of knowledge that I have been able to knit together into a web of tenuous conclusions.

Although there are liches who command

powers that are assuredly will-driven in nature or effect, a lich whose very undead state is derived from its mesmeric abilities is quite rare indeed. In fact, aside from the beast of evil spoken of in the journal of Matthew Swiftsinger, who seems to have served such a creature and then later confronted it while part of a group led by the infamous Harkon Lukas of Kartakass, only three other such liches have been rumored to exist.

As a scholar of the profane and evil, I have learned to accept much that defies the very precepts of logic—there is very little which I will ever call “impossible.” Even so, I was predisposed to dismiss the existence of the mental arts as chicanery or magic. I found it difficult to distinguish between a master of mental powers and an archmage of the arcane, until the journal of Matthew Swiftsinger came into my hands some time ago. Swiftsinger was a bard, himself, but he was also a practitioner of the mental arts.

I was given Swiftsinger's personal journal while on a werewolf-hunting expedition in Kartakass (yet another subject about which I must write someday). It was in that shadowy realm that I first heard stories of the mesmeric lich. As I am well aware of the preponderance of bards in that land, I was inclined to dismiss the notion as a bit of dramatic narrative. However, my exhaustive research techniques inevitably led to the bard's journal.

Now having digested its contents, I must conclude that his accounts ring so true on so many counts that I am forced to consider Swiftsinger's mental talents as a science apart from that of magic. Even more disturbing, it would seem that he honed his talents under a mentalist lich. I have included a pertinent passage from his journal below. I think the fact that he never spun a tale or lyric from this experience lends credence to the truth of it.

*“. . . and though I was ever possessed of the gift
to look into men's minds and see the secrets they
withheld from the world, I believed it to be but
the intuition of the artist, a mere conceit of*

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sensitivity that opened my mind to truth and the human heart.

And then did I make acquaintance with Master Ulathar (as he named himself, though it was just another of his prevarications), and he inducted me into his elite circle of mentalists. He taught me not only how to probe the secrets of others' minds, but how to subvert their convictions with my own notions.

Quite nearly did I lose sight of truth, and my power to tell it, before I glimpsed the mind of my master and turned against him—it—and returned to the true calling of the bard.

The Mind of the Master

In my research concerning ghosts, I have recorded stories of unfortunates set upon by evil doers in the guise of friends, and of innocents fatally betrayed by loved ones who somehow, by sheer force of will, reanimated their mortal shell to wreak vengeance on their murderers. While this type of reanimation is fueled by an outraged spirit determined to forestall its own death, the state itself is not one specifically sought by the revenant in such tales, and once its goal is fulfilled, it happily seeks the afterlife for which it was destined.

Mentalist lichs differ from such beings on several points: First, and most obviously, they have purposefully sought their undead state. Second, they do not end their unnatural life with the accomplishment of any goal; rather, their unlife is their goal, and it now serves them in the pursuit of further mental endeavors. Finally, they are masters of the mental disciplines, rather than unfortunates whose emotional state combined tragically with their force of will to enable them to gain a temporary semblance or extension of life.

While it is a tortuous and near-impossible thing to try and grasp the mind of a mentalist lich, it is not beyond mortal ken to understand the drives that led it to its undead state: knowledge, a drive for excellence, and power—the very same ambition that possesses all of its kind. More specifically, it would seem

that mentalist lichs share a burning desire to outstrip all others in their mental capabilities. They crave a discipline that will raise them above all others, even those of their own ilk. They passionately crave the self knowledge that they are the best, the supreme masters of the mind, that no other of their mental stature exists. Indeed, to survive they need the same power that allows them to pursue their studies beyond the laws of mortals, beyond the reach of human comprehension, and across the very planes of existence, life, and unlife.

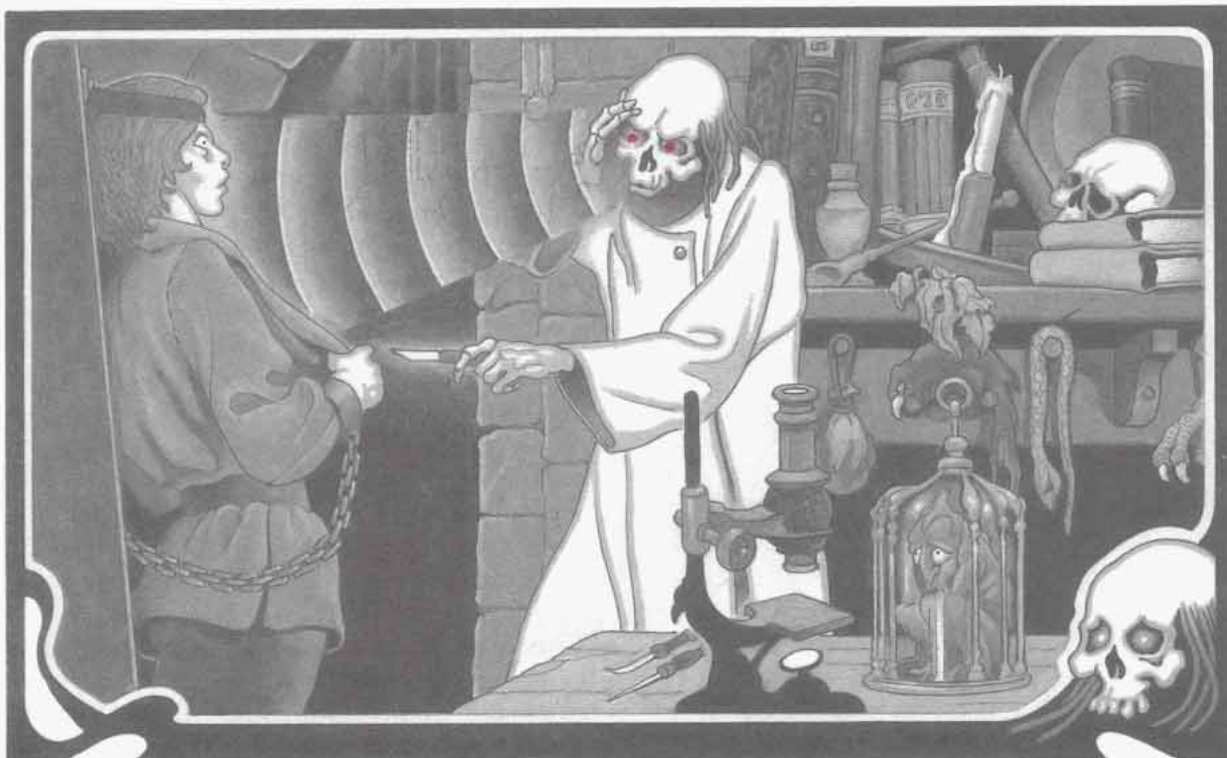
Mentalist lichs are by their nature the most studious of their breed, and so they are the most reclusive. They commit their life spans of millennia to honing their disciplines beyond the aspirations of any mortal creature. Spending years in the refinement of one hair's-breadth, one tortuous point of logical control, one meditative discipline of mind over matter, is nothing more than a mere schoolbook exercise in penmanship to these masters of arcane will. In the end, they transcend the realm of human thought and enter a mental world which is beyond mortal understanding.

Mentalist vs. Mystical Lich Auras

A striking difference between the mentalist and the mystical lich lies in the nature of their auras. The aura of cold darkness which commonly accompanies a common lich is absent in the creature of mesmeric power. Where other recountings speak of the intense cold of a lich's presence, the tales told by Swiftsinger speak only of a prickling of the skin, an undercurrent of power which was evident as he neared the foul beast, evident before the creature was even seen for perhaps twenty or more paces.

As he drew near to the lich, now completely revealed to Swiftsinger for what it was, a mental oppression came upon him such that he was unable to think clearly. Every action became an effort of extreme will, and he was convinced that some sort of power had seized his sword arm and made it strike poorly. A mage of some

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power who was in the group was reported to speak with extreme effort, as if spitting out words slowly into the breath of a hurricane.

This effect would seem to be some clouding of the mind which is caused by the aura of the mentalist lich. I surmise that it is an innate quality, ever present and requiring no effort or concentration to put into effect, just as is the aura of cold that enfolds a mystical lich. Whether or not this clouding has some special effect on those of exceptional mental or mesmeric ability, I am unable to say.

Even worse, this cloud of confusion can be directed by the dark thoughts of the mesmeric lich. A mental blow from this creature causes not only physical damage, but a psychic repercussion that feels as if it tears away at the very mind and spirit of a being. Swiftsinger described it, saying, "It was as if the icy fingers of death had picked at the ravelled edges of my

mind and then *yanked* loose a handful of the threads of my life."

Other powers that mentalist liches manifest are difficult to discern. Swiftsinger's tale speaks of people set upon by their own shadows, or who were forced to fight hordes of imaginary spiders or snakes or wolves (in each case, the creature feared most by the victim), or who were battered by mental waves of hatred and terror until they crouched as gibbering fools, drooling upon the ground. He also speaks of mighty warriors forced to commit the most horrific of acts in their own minds, and forced to feel themselves *enjoying* their foul deeds, and then released to pangs of remorse and confusion. Truly, the ability of the mentalist lich to climb inside an individual's own mind, elicit that which most horrifies him, and then torment him with it, is the mentalist lich's most insidious and vile capability of all.

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The Lair of a Mentalist Lich

As a devotee of cognitive pursuits, the mentalist lich rarely needs to leave its lair—it can conduct experiments within its own mind. Even when it does venture forth, I speculate that it does so through its mental devotions, transporting it self through a refined exertion of mind over matter. These peculiar abilities and exceptional reclusive tendencies make the discovery of its lair an arduous task.

But there are logical places to search. As usual, the lair would most likely be secluded and untraveled by mortals. Also, such a lair would be relatively close to a repository of knowledge, such as an ancient and well-established library or a college of mesmeric discipline, as the lure of accumulated knowledge and wisdom would prove a siren call to a being devoted to perfecting its mind. A third area type to which the lich would be drawn is any site of mass carnage. Like lichs of mystical derivation, mentalist lichs seem to feel an affinity for places imbued with the psychic resonances of death. Places with a history of great tragedy—huge battlefields, castles buried by landslides and volcanic eruptions, colleges swamped by tidal waves so that they are drowned beneath the seas—these are the places that call out, in a perverse way, with a kindred spirit to the mentalist lich. Perhaps such a lich feels kinship to the many wispy echoes of mental agony left from the tragedy. Or, in a revelation of its momentous ego and hubris, perhaps it equates the massive human tragedies embodied by such places with its own tragic transformation.

The juxtaposition of these three requisites can sometimes create a nexus wherein the lich's lair may be pinpointed. Such is the place for the hunter to begin his tracking. Of course, many of the devices and strategies used by the more common lich to protect its lair are also undoubtedly employed by mentalist lichs. As always, an abundance of lethal tricks and traps remains the surest sign that you are getting close to the lair of a lich.

Servants of the Mentalist

While a lich of the more common arcane derivation primarily uses undead as its minions, the mentalist lich is more likely to draw upon living persons for help. I base this hypothesis upon the assumption that sentient creatures are of much more use to a mentalist than mindless undead. I doubt that most servants of a mentalist lich truly know what they serve, for surely their sharp minds are muddled by their still-sharper master's will.

From Swiftsinger's accounts and what little I have gleaned from other texts and stories of travelers from afar, mortals who are possessed of the rare talents of the mind and who wish to develop them are often at a loss to find a teacher under whom to study. True masters of the mental arts are so few and far between that even those of good heart may be tempted to study at the feet of one of such evil as the mesmeric lich. Such a creature would be the ultimate sage, as it has manifestly looked beyond the pale, far beyond what any mortal mind could experience and, perhaps, grasp.

Such lichs may use their powers to cloud men's minds, to make themselves appear as normal mortals of wisdom. They would then attract students to perform quests in distant lands, labor as experimental guinea pigs, and serve as guards and soldiers. It would not be beyond a mentalist lich to set itself up as the head of a mystic cult to a nonexistent deity, or to masquerade as a minor god itself, to gain followers of use to it.

Unfortunately for students ambitious and gifted enough to study with a mentalist lich, the master is as likely to fatally entangle them in its web of subtle and devious plots as it is to impart to them the knowledge they so passionately seek. Furthermore, once a servant has served his master's purposes, he might well find himself serving one last, less profitable service—I shudder to guess at what awaits even the most faithful servant of the faithless lich when his usefulness is exhausted. For the lich, dismissing a loyal student who successfully

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completed many arduous quests would carry all the pangs of saying "farewell" to Lord Azalin's tax collector, yet that student would be extraordinarily fortunate if a dismissal were all he got for his troubles. And woe to any student who displeases or annoys the lich! Killing a student who failed the least task or who dared to remain beyond his welcome would equate in the monster's mind to squashing a roach in one's kitchen.

The point of this discussion is that the path of a mentalist human is probably the clearest path to a lich of the same bent. Those who devote their lives to pursuing the powers of the mind are few and far between. Even if the student fails to learn the true nature of his master and repudiate it, (unlike the bard Swiftsinger), a resourceful lich hunter may follow the cerebral river to its source and then choke off the flow once and for all. On the other hand, followers of a powerful mesmeric master would certainly be extremely intelligent. Whether or not they might be used as instruments of betrayal is questionable at best.

The Face of the Master

The appearance and abilities of the mentalist lich are difficult to detail, as I have only the journal of Matthew Swiftsinger and some bits of rumor upon which to base my conclusions. I must speak in generalities, and the wise reader must be wary of my speculations.

According to the account of Swiftsinger, the mentalist lich shares a superficial physical similarity with the lich of arcane origin. The flesh is shriveled upon the bones, giving the creature the appearance of a corpse dried by a desert wind. The eyes have disappeared from their sockets, or been transformed, and twin points of crimson illuminate the spaces.

These creatures seem to prefer loose robes of colorful design, but they do not maintain their garments, except perhaps by illusory means. Thus, their finery is tattered and worn when their true form is at last viewed.

As may be expected, the mentalist lich is inclined to collect magical items with which to defend itself and enhance its powers, rather than make them. Even in the guise of an illusion, the presence of curious baubles and intricate jewelry may give away the lich.

By "mesmeric disciplines, hypnotic powers of will, and mental powers," Dr. Van Richten means, of course, *psionics*. Two types of liches may have psionic abilities in Ravenloft: liches of mystical origin who had psionic wild talents while they were alive (and who retain their psionic abilities when they become undead), and psionicists who have managed to achieve lichdom—not mystically, but through a very specific psionic process.

The details of this process, and all necessary information regarding psionic liches, can be found on pages 95-96 of this book.

Psionics in Ravenloft

The psionic disciplines of liches are changed in the atmosphere of the RAVENLOFT® campaign setting to reflect the changes the demiplane of dread has upon all psionic powers. The effects upon psionics are consistent with those upon magic. Roughly, they are changed to reflect the following principles:

- Anything summoned or otherwise transported from another plane into Ravenloft cannot go back automatically.
- Divination abilities, spells, and powers are weaker in Ravenloft, favoring the secret ways of evil. Good and evil cannot be detected by spells and other powers, although law and chaos can be divined.
- Powers, spells, and magical items that are wholly evil or can be used only for evil purposes require a Ravenloft powers check each time they are used. This applies to most necromantic and life-energy draining powers.
- Those spells, powers, and items that create or assist the living dead or similar necromantic spells may actually work better in Ravenloft.

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Many sciences and devotions have specific changes which will not be detailed here. DMs are strongly encouraged to consult the "Dark Recesses of the Mind" book in the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set for a complete discussion of psionics in the RAVENLOFT® campaign setting.

In addition, it should be noted that the undead horrors of Ravenloft can put up a shield of false thoughts indistinguishable from the real thing, even with ESP or similar powers. The undead creature must consciously choose to do this, but it does not cost the creature an action to do so. It can choose to portray any emotion or thought, even love or friendship, although it finds these distasteful. The undead are immune to any mind-control or mind-altering ability while in Ravenloft. This means that most telepathic disciplines are useless against them.

Psionic strength points (PSPs) are regained by player characters at a much slower rate in Ravenloft, due to its oppressive nature:

Activity	Recovery Rate
Hard exertion, fighting	None
Walking, riding	1 per 2 hours
Sitting, reading	1 per hour
Rejuvenating*, sleeping	2 per hour

* Rejuvenating is a psionic nonweapon proficiency.

Finally, those bold psionics who make mental contact with the undead (in any of a number of ways, but most commonly with an attempt to use a telepathic science or devotion), may be forced, at the DM's option, to make a *madness check*. This check is a saving throw vs. paralyzation to which Wisdom bonuses for saves vs. mental effects apply. If the check is failed, the psionic person making the check can become insane. The madness check and its consequences are discussed at length in the section on "Madness" in the "Dark Recesses of the Mind" book of the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set.



IX: THE PRIESTLY LICH



M

an doth not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.

—Joseph Glanvill

When I last prayed to my god, I saw that She was sad beyond words. She had witnessed the mournful transformation of one of Her priests into an undead form—a lich.

The priest had abandoned all that he had learned and forsaken his god's blessings to suck from the rotten fruit of evil power.

I do not know what has happened to that priest, other than he is doomed to suffer eternally for the betrayal and for giving his spirit over to a malignancy which serves only to curse this world by its very existence.

—From a conversation with Tregarde of the Misty Dales

While mages are considered the most likely candidates to fall prey to the lure of lichdom, it should not be forgotten that the road to unlife may be walked by priests as well. In most respects the processes are similar. The priest also must discover the ritual, whether it is revealed by beings from elsewhere, unearthed from some ancient scripture where it lies in riddle, or unveiled by his deity in prayer. The priest also must manufacture a phylactery and concoct a poisonous potion to go with it.

However, the transformation for a priest is based in priestly magic, priestly ritual, and ceremony. A ritual designed for a mage would prove to be certain doom for a cleric.

Since a priest gains his magic through ritual contact with a deity, it is beyond belief that his deity would not know of such a profound change as the follower transforming into a lich. The very thought of being able to hide such a thing from a deity one serves so intimately is absurd. Therefore, it is almost universal that

any clerical lich is of a neutral or, more likely, evil bent, as the powers of good certainly will not tolerate such unnatural transformations among their followers.

In general, the clerical lich tends to be much rarer than the wizard lich. The introspection common to secular magical studies promotes a greater number of mortals to lichdom. Clerics tend to have certain duties that mandate their association with other mortals and which keep them more “human.” Service to another being, by its very nature, also inhibits turning to lichdom since it suppresses the pervasive self-absorption necessary to drive the aspirant.

Goodly Priests and Their Deities

I cannot imagine what would cause a priest serving the cause of good, justice, and order to turn against everything he has devoted his life to preserving. Nor can I imagine what the wrath of his betrayed god would be.

During their research, priests sometimes encounter the secrets to lichdom. Perhaps these secrets are given to them surreptitiously by an evil deity, or perhaps they are revealed by the priest's own god as a test. Whatever the means, some priests come by the secret and elect to take full advantage of it for their own gains. They may justify their actions to themselves by saying that in this manner they will better or more powerfully or more everlastingly serve their deity, but these are mere rationalizations. The transformation to lichdom is always, at its heart, a selfish and ego-driven course of action.

For most, even acquiring the necessary components for the ritual—organs from slain, sentient beings and poisons of dire repute and illegal status—is enough to cause the priest to be banished from his church if he is discovered. And he surely shall be excommunicated when he undergoes the transformation ceremony, for then his deity certainly will *know* what has happened and inform other followers of his actions. When a priest is so banished, he loses

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all of the support of his religion. He can seek no lodging within lands or buildings owned or run by it, nor can he associate with priests of his former religion nor even other followers who know of his status.

Worse, the priest loses his ability to cast spells of healing, protection, and blessing, and he finds that the strength his deity gave him to confront the undead is taken from him. We people of common peasant stock can survive without the ability to turn undead away from us by presenting a holy symbol and without the ability to bless or heal or inspire the faithful to victory. But if a priest should lose these abilities, then it represents a collapse of the priest's very reason for being. He has turned his back on his life and jeopardized all of the society he was trained to protect and nurture. Who will be there now for the people he served, to heal their wounds of body and spirit and to turn away the undead?

The god who most likely influenced the person into becoming a priest, who at the very least welcomed the priest into his church, is not likely to embrace the priest's treachery. In fact, the deity is more likely to react with a terrible curse upon the fallen priest. So, clerics of good are, to my knowledge, unheard of among lichkind. Their deities have abandoned and cursed them, and to continue on they must have forged a pact with darker deities—at best, the disinterested and cold gods of pure knowledge, and at the worst the gods of evil and decay. In short, I must conclude that no priest of goodness can ever become a lich.

According to the *Monstrous Compendium*, liches may be of any alignment. However, clerical liches, as well as wizard liches, are uniformly evil within the RAVENLOFT® campaign setting. The dark powers that guide the demiplane of dread select only evil liches to bring to that place, and the native inhabitants of the demiplane who have the abilities, resources, and who escape the notice of the lord of their domain long enough to become liches are nearly nonexistent.

Neutral Priests and Their Deities

It seems reasonable to me that priests who espouse neither morality nor immorality, neither good nor evil, are the most likely to become clerical liches. In the main, these priest serve gods of knowledge, who are often revered by mages. These deities promote an ethic of rising to one's own level of ability by one's own hand. This is the ethic which promotes aspirations to lichdom.

It might very well be in the interests of a neutral deity (for who am I to know the ways of gods?) to allow its servant to remain on this world long beyond the age of mortal men, in order to accumulate and relate knowledge and experience to him. While potions of youth might seem a logical resort in such a case, or brews that increase the normal span of man's life, these concoctions are known to be of questionable effect. They cause stress in the normal fabric of a person's physical being, stretching it back and forth like a piece of rubber, until one potion too many is consumed, and *snap*, the body disintegrates. One might rely on potions of longevity for a span of decades if one knew their mysteries (which I, alas, do not), but in due course the hand of death must close upon us all—or most of us, at any rate.

Therefore, it might, in the mind of some coldly calculating and inhuman god, seem an eminently logical and necessary next step to endow a faithful and trusted servant with the information needed to transform into a lich. The scrupulous performance of the research and processes necessary to complete the ritual of transformation, and the success or failure of the rite, would then prove the ultimate test of whether this servant was worthy of lichdom.

I find myself unable, no matter how broad of mind I attempt to be, to sympathize with the intentions of such gods. Mortals may not know the intentions of the divine, but how could a deity put one of its faithful through an experience guaranteed to warp its very mental being into something else? Surely such a god

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would know the unliving fruit of black knowledge is so perverse that a drift into evil is inevitable for its servant!

Evil Priests and Their Deities

I have no doubt there are fiends who strive to find proper candidates for lichdom. And I doubt not their success. Evil religions have their own dark goals that are counter to the forces of light. To tip the balance, some evil deities surely attempt to find priests to turn into lichs, making them a much more powerful tool in some evil design.

I have known some servants of these dark gods—they are a paranoid and elitist lot, certainly a mortal reflection of the thing they worship. To earn the “gift” of lichdom (as I am sure they regard it), there are surely many trials of which only the priests themselves are aware. These tests must be extremely difficult, or I fear the world would be quite overrun with priestly lichs; such a station is highly prized by all creatures of evil bent.

Having some understanding of the hearts and minds of evil, I speculate that the tests of lichdom are particularly strenuous because the transformation into lichdom represents an increase in power so significant that the deity may have difficulty maintaining control over the lich. This simple conclusion explains rather well why evil clerical lichs fall into two types: those fanatically serving their deity and those attempting to become one.

The fanatics are extremely rare (I know of only one in existence), but they actually are the most open about their condition as lichs, at least with the followers of their god (my knowledge was gained through, shall we say, *eavesdropping*). They are the high priests or priestesses of deities of death or disease. They preside over unspeakable and foul rites in huge temple complexes, protected and served by legions of fanatic followers. Their deities reward their devotion with ever larger insights into the mysteries of magic, faith, and the energies of that plane of negative energy. They

are valuable generals in the ongoing battle between evil and good over the hearts and spirits of mortals, and their gods reward their loyalty with bounteous prosperity, ample knowledge, and often miraculous powers beyond those of even the common lich.

Clerical lichs are more likely to have salient abilities than wizard lichs. These may be abilities granted them by their deity (and thus are removable by their deity), or they may be manifestations of a difference or improvement in the nature of the ritual of transformation that invests them with lichdom. These special abilities may be the same ones discussed under “Salient Abilities,” in Chapter II, or they may be powers more in line with the specific deity to whom the clerical lich owes allegiance. These special abilities often show more of a subtle, interactive, charm-and illusion-oriented bent than those of the wizard lich (which tends to rely more on brute force), again emphasizing the more social nature of the cleric from which the lich springs. For instance, a clerical lich might have a *whisper of suggestion* ability rather than the *voice of maleficence* ability, which can be used on anyone at any time, working like the *suggestion* spell, but with a +2 to the target’s saving throw. The lich could use this ability up to six times a day, and its *suggestions* could indeed include harmful acts, but the target would then be entitled to a saving throw at a +2 bonus.

Those evil lichs attempting to become deities are often superficially identical to the fanatics. But they gradually subvert their god’s followers’ devotion, first portraying themselves as mouthpieces and then actual personifications of the god’s power and desires. They walk a thin and twisted line of duplicity, hoping to amass enough of a following (and enough magical items, artifacts of power, and abilities) to promote themselves to the status of a deity without their own god divining their ultimate intent too soon and squashing them like the two-faced insects they are.

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Psychological Impacts of the Change

A person has to possess a spirit at least tainted, if not twisted, by evil to want to become a lich. The realization of the goal is an even more twisted event.

Some of the ingredients in the potion of transformation are exotic and fatal poisons of mind-boggling strength. When drunk, these ingredients do more than alter the body—they alter the mind extensively as well.

Although I certainly have no direct evidence to support it, I can say that a lich has a mind—a whole psychology—that is all its own. The mind of the priest is swept away, shriveled by the potion and shattered by the rites. A cleric is a person of faith—faith in himself, faith in his deity, faith in the steadfast workings of the universe. The change into a lich is a profound leap of faith in a direction that goes against the grain of the very constants of the universe in which the cleric has faith: birth, life, death, and afterlife.

The mind of the being that exists after the transformation is profoundly *not* the mind of the being that existed before because it has taken it upon itself, in even this small way, to defy the natural ordering of the gods with respect to itself. The clerical lich has set itself above its god in the matter of the avoidance of its death, and the fact that it finds itself still in existence after the transformation, after having the temerity to defy the universal order, subtly but absolutely shifts the underpinnings of its mind. In the priest's place is a wholly different being, one composed of a seething evil and pride. The personality of the formerly living person grows fainter and fainter through the centuries, eventually fading beyond the lich's own memory. All of the knowledge and skills of the person yet reside within the skull of the lich, and perhaps even the same goals as well. But driving the lich toward its goals is a lurking evil so black that it defies mortal experience.

The greatest loss in the transformation is the

fact that the living person's personality, his very *spirit*, is forever gone—irrevocably erased then remade in the image of the dominating power that is the lich. This loss is what makes deities of good abhor the transformation and deities of evil cautious as to its use.

The clerical lich worships and receives spells from a deity, just as it did in life, but many deities will reject a cleric for seeking lichdom or destroy him out of hand. Clerical liches therefore serve deities devoted to raw knowledge, like Azuth or Mystra of the FORGOTTEN REALMS® campaign setting, or Thoth, the god of knowledge in the Egyptian pantheon, or Math Mathonwy of the Celtic pantheon; or they serve deities of death, decay, and/or evil, such as Set of the Egyptian pantheon, Hel of the Norse pantheon, Arawn of the Celtic pantheon, and Cyric and Beshaba of the FORGOTTEN REALMS campaign setting.

The clerical lich is created through the same process at the wizard lich, except that the spells it casts are obviously clerical versions. Common abilities of the clerical lich also match those of the mage lich, in that they have an icy, damaging touch, an aura of fear, certain spell immunities, and they can be hit only by enchanted weapons of +1 or better. Clerics who become liches lose the ability to turn undead. Rather, they may command undead as described in the *Player's Handbook* under "Evil Priests and the Undead," as well as making use of the other methods of dominating, controlling, and commanding undead described elsewhere in this book.



X: THE DEMILICH



*hat is not dead which can eternal lie,
And with strange eons even death
may die.*

—H.P. Lovecraft

Throughout this guide, I have attempted to impart the sheer threat implicit in the existence of a lich. I do not believe that there is a more dangerous creature to be found in any realm or any plane of existence—except for one, and that is the subject of this chapter: the *demilich*. Here is a creature so evil, so powerful, that the lich would be little more than a quasimancer to it. In fact, the *demilich* is so nearly omnipotent that magic is more an old habit than a life's ambition!

I simply cannot fathom a mind so old and potent and surely warped as that of a *demilich*. In fact, I have never seen one, nor met anyone else who has. All that I have to argue that such a monster exists is a fragment of a legend recorded in the journal of Mirinalithiar. Its veracity is highly questionable, and I am quite disposed to ignore it, yet I cannot. If there is even the remotest possibility that such an abomination exists, then we must take steps to learn about it. We may never possess the power to destroy it, yet we may learn the best way to avoid it and its wrath.

Here are the pertinent passages from Mirinalithiar's diary:

It is told that there came to be trapped within this land of the Mists a skull . . . a skull with precious stones for teeth, but nothing else to betoken any significance. From whence it came is lost in the dust of ageless time, and to whom it belonged no one can say.

In its resting place did the skull lie for time out of mind . . . and never did it stir until its resting place was disturbed.

Then came Androlinatar, greatest of all explorers, who found the resting place of the

skull with magic given to him by the gods themselves. With him came Elinver, greatest of all wizards, and Jazapan, greatest of all warriors, and Honik, holiest of all priests, and with them came their legion of faithful and valiant followers. As a mighty army they took the lands before them, and as a mighty army they came upon the resting place of the skull.

. . . and when they entered the resting place of the skull that had lain there for time out of mind, it immediately arose from the ground and spoke to them, saying, "I am Hero's Bane. I am invincible. I am demilich."

. . . and without warning the skull lashed out at Androlinatar and all his company of the mightiest men who ever lived, and it ripped their spirits from their breasts and changed them into priceless gems, and it wore them as its teeth, and they were powerless to stop it.

. . . the servants were instantly burned to ashes where they stood . . . excepting one who was sent hurtling from the mountain, that he might take warning to the world, and gnash his teeth, and despair, and die. . . .

As the reader can see, the prospect of such a creature is not a pleasant one!

With no evidence to support the existence of this creature, I have consulted and speculated with numerous sages, mages, and priests. To my surprise, they have recounted similar legends to me, of monstrous powers within the confines of a disembodied skull, of gems that entrap the living spirit, of creatures who sail unfettered among the countless planes of the multiverse, absolutely disinterested in the affairs of any single world, let alone any single person! With the help of these scholars, I have written this chapter. The knowledge contained herein may be of little or no use to the reader (an encounter with a *demilich* is as hopeless an exercise as a person may attempt!), but if knowledge is power, then the reader is always wise to gather as much knowledge as possible.

X: THE DEMILICH

Origins

My best guess at the origin of the demilich is that it is an undead wizard who has lived so long, learned so much, and gathered such power that it has literally achieved a new level of existence. The creature's definition of power, itself, has evolved entirely beyond the grasp of the mortal mind, and so the demilich has abandoned all mortal exploits to survey realms in which only the gods tread. Having no interest in the world that gave it form, the demilich surrenders that form, and its body crumbles to useless dust. All that remains is a skull.

By the time its body falls into ruin, the lich has learned virtually all the arcane secrets of its world—all things that both should and should never have been discovered at all. It has had millennia to reflect upon its evil and the nature of power, and it has mused upon that which even the blackest hearts would call vile.

Perhaps the new demilich abandons its grasp

of the concepts of Good and Evil as we know them. Perhaps Good and Evil do not even exist in its new understanding. The creature may now seek knowledge that, in the grand scope of things, is entirely neutral—mortal emotions and perspectives are trivial, petty, not worth consideration. Mayhap the demilich joins the deities themselves, to dance through the ether, enjoying whatever inconceivable lives they have. Or demiliches may become the very heart and soul of evil, influencing others to follow in their paths and spread destruction throughout the realms of the living.

Of any of these things, I can never be certain. All I can do is contemplate what they must be like, and, ironically, hope that I never learn the answers to my own questions! It occurs to me that I am waxing exceedingly esoteric, which I hoped to avoid. But when one is faced with a creature as incomprehensible as the demilich, somewhat bizarre and philosophical jargon is frequently all that one can manage. I only hope that my meanderings will be of any help at all.



X: THE DEMILICH

The Transformation

In this evil world, there is much opportunity for the lich to exist for quite a long time indeed. The land of the Mists seems to be all too closely connected to darker energies upon which the lich feeds for its survival. Indeed, the lich is able to channel this dark energy through its body and spirit for centuries upon centuries.

Whatever the duration of its life in this physical world, it seems that the unchecked lich is destined to undergo a gradual transformation. This change is a subtle one that requires little specific effort from the lich. Most of my consultants agree the conversion must occur naturally; there can be no way for any creature, living or dead, to purposefully pursue such a course—the gods, themselves, would surely intercede. Rather, I suspect that the lich becomes more engrossed in its studies and meditations over time, until it has no care for matters in the physical world at all. In fact, it would not be surprising if a lich were to relocate to a place where it might never be disturbed by anyone from the physical realm.

In this case, it is reasonable to assume that the lich would begin to neglect the maintenance of its own body, working instead to greater efforts in absolutely pure research and meditation. As the undead wizard delves deeper and deeper into the theoretical, the theoretical becomes more and more substantive while substance becomes increasingly theoretical.

After a time, our perspective of established fact would become pointless to a lich, even a nuisance, and the lich would have no more reason to consult its extensive collection of tomes that deal with the manipulation of this physical world. Perhaps all the information in the gigantic library shrinks in the budding demilich's vast consciousness, until the entire accumulation fits into a tiny, rarely visited corner of its incredible mind!

I have an image in my mind, of a lich upon a throne of bone—bone of enemies it crushed when it entertained concerns over the material

realm of men and monsters. Without rest or sustenance, the lich thinks upon unknown subjects every moment of every day—days that do not exist as it sits upon that throne without an audience. It has long forgotten the undead servitors it once commanded, long forgotten the evil projects it initiated with the labor of their skeletal backs, long abandoned exploits that rocked the mortal world to its foundations.

Now it merely sits and contemplates who-knows-what, of ethereal regions beyond the physical realm, of spaces beyond even that. Its once-powerful alchemical solutions have dried and fallen into powdery neglect. Even magical items that would conquer a world have lost their luster, and they sit in chests of which the lich cannot be bothered to remember the location. The wood of its benches, the paper of its tomes, all things consumable by age have disappeared in the face of eternity.

Ultimately, all that remains of the lich slowly and inexorably decomposes beyond recovery. All that remains of the dreaded lich is that object which will probably last forever: its skull. The former receptacle of that formidable mind finally comes to rest atop a mound of dust that was once its body. Perhaps it will sink into the seat of the throne upon which it once sat.

Again, I have an image in my mind, of a skull lying in a pillow of dust, its empty sockets devoid of even the dimmest hint of a reddish glow where once there was a blaze of unconquerable evil. . . .

When a lich attains demilich status, it abandons all attempts to reconstitute its body, choosing rather to explore the outer planes (except those within Ravenloft, who are limited to the border ethereal). Therefore, its body breaks down and eventually dissolves into a skull, a few bones, and a pile of dust.

Its has the ability to re-form its body at any time, but most demiliches clearly feel no inclination to do so. Indeed, a demilich in need of a physical body could conjure a healthy one out of thin air or, more likely, simply commandeer the body of any bystander.

X: THE DEMILICH



Final Analysis

By the time a lich allows its body to fall into dust, it has learned all it can of its physical world, or at least as much as it needs to; there simply is nothing else to concern it *within the realm of mortals*. Hence, it becomes an incorporeal entity, free to travel to places of which we can only imagine. Perhaps the lich perceives the very forces that comprise and drive the world and begins to drive them itself.

What fate awaits on the other side of physical reality? Does a demilich become a part of the evil that surrounds us? Is it absorbed by a greater evil that has throughout the millennia plotted for demiliches to come into being, so it may snatch their life energies and satisfy its own grand master plan? Does evil even have a meaning to the once-mortal wizard anymore? I'm afraid that we will never know. Perhaps demilichdom is merely another step in an infinite line of lives. Mayhap becoming a lich is but the *first of many steps* toward some

unknown state of transcendence. Whatever the end result, whether or not pure immortality is achieved, the price is centuries of pain, torture, and an evil scourge upon a land of innocents. And, of course, the ultimate price is the cost of their personal spirit. Once transformed into the body of a lich, a being can never experience the simple joys of living. Nor can it enjoy the afterlife we achieve through our gods. In a very real sense, the lich lives forever, yet it has nothing to live for.

Still, there is one happy conclusion to be gleaned from all this supposition: the demilich has no interest or use for the world as we know it. Wherever it has gone, there seems to be no reason for it to return, unless it be to defend the place where its mortal remains sleep away the eons. So long as we mortals do not disturb its rest, I think it safe to say that the demilich will return the favor. And if by some great accident the reader should come upon the remains of a demilich, then *nothing* can help him anyway.

X: THE DEMILICH

Dr. Van Richten hopes that the demilich has no affect upon the Prime Material plane, but when the lich has passed on to another stage of existence, its will may be yet felt in the physical world. Perhaps it may embark on a large-scale conquest in an attempt to drain an entire realm or world of its life essence, and player characters may come into play as pawns in a cosmic chess game. Or the demilich may attempt to cross swords with the gods, themselves! Whatever the case, an adventure directly involving a demilich will call for extremely high-level characters and maybe even an avatar or two.

Since Ravenloft is effectively sequestered from the rest of the multiverse, a demilich cannot penetrate any plane beyond the border Ethereal. On the other hand, they may be the *only* creatures who can actually escape the demiplane of dread of their own volition. In any event, the DM is strongly urged to exercise great care in the use of demiliches. They are rare to the verge of being unique, and they should not be portrayed as characters who galavant across the cosmos, playing havoc with the laws of the gods.

The final resting place of a demilich will be so obscure that the greatest of adventuring parties could find it only by the most incredible of coincidences. Even so, the demilich will not make a great effort to secure its remains because it simply has no reason to do so. When the time has come to enter demilich status, its undead body is an irrelevance.

General information regarding the demilich can be found in the *Monstrous Compendium*, within the "Lich" entry. It will be especially necessary for the DM to tailor the demilich's abilities to the needs of his or her campaign, more so than for virtually any other monster. The demilich is as close to godlike in status as a monster can be, so its powers must be unique and specialized.

The following information provides some guidelines for additional powers that may be accorded to the demilich.

Possible Powers

The demilich can be afforded the ability to perform actions that affect the Prime Material plane on a large scale. Even though it is a disembodied life form caught between the Negative Material, the Ethereal, and the Astral planes, the demilich can affect the Prime Material plane by directing energies from those planes it inhabits. This should be achieved only when conditions on the Prime Material are perfect; for example, during an eclipse or the passing of a comet, or any other exceedingly rare occurrence. At such a time, the gateways between the planes are at their weakest and the spirit of the demilich is at its strongest, as the demilich is then able to draw from both sides.

The physical manifestation of a demilich should not be within the scope of adventuring parties to combat. The only way to defeat a demilich is to stumble upon its remains and destroy them in the manner described in the *Monstrous Compendium*. Rather, these powers should be used indirectly, perhaps to begin and/or end grand campaigns with an event of cosmic import or travesty. Here are some suggestions for demilich powers:

- The demilich can inhabit and control 100 undead creatures of any type at once, maintaining both the creatures' innate abilities and endowing them with full sentience and lich powers. A legion of liches with a single consciousness can decimate entire armies!
- The lich is able to locate and communicate telepathically with any evil-aligned creature or person at will. The subject of the demilich's contact cannot ignore or resist the demilich, but must listen to and obey every command. Range and number of possibly controlled individuals is up to the DM.
- The lich is able to wreak havoc upon a 100-mile radius area with earthquakes, fire storms, and other catastrophic occurrences, killing all or almost all living things therein.

CONCLUSION



Of all the terrible monsters I have hunted, the lich has been the most elusive. Its only association with mortals lies in the acquisition of the arcana that all wizards crave. The lich is like a gourmet who feasts upon the magic of the world. When it has what it wants, it abandons the company of civilization and

withdraws to candle-lit chambers in unknown recesses, to digest what it has taken in. Unfortunately, its appetite is insatiable.

Because of their secretive ways, I have had more difficulty unearthing solid information

about liches than any other creature of the night. Only Harmon Ruscheider has observed the lich at length and lived to tell the story, and only because the lich—whose name he never learned—accidentally destroyed itself in a power ritual. As the reader may remember, Dr. Ruscheider went mad and died with the knowledge he was given. Although I crave that knowledge I realize ignorance is, indeed, bliss.

But ignorance also is a hypnotic state that desensitizes one to impending doom, and I must *never* surrender to it. If the observations I made in my introduction to this subject are true, then my own, beloved Darkon is ruled by a lich—one who cares all too little for privacy! In writing this treatise, I have put my life in more jeopardy than a warrior who goes to battle without arms or armor.

So be it. May this and all my dissertations upon the cursed monsters of this world far outlive me. If even one phylactery is smashed to a thousand shards because of the ink I have shed, then the score will be more than even!





If such great powers or beings there may be conceivably a survival . . . a survival of a hugely remote period when . . . consciousness was manifested, perhaps, in shapes and forms long since withdrawn before the tide of advancing humanity . . . forms of which poetry and legend alone have caught a flying memory and called them gods, monsters, mythical beings of all sorts and kinds. . . .

—Algernon Blackwood

It would be a shame to use the lich in nothing more than a simple search-and-destroy scenario. A villain as intelligent and evil as the lich should not simply hang around its (sort of) secret lair and wait for adventurers to flush it out and kill it.

Indeed, the lich is so complex in its abilities and what it has gone through to develop them that it very nearly demands to be role-played. This is not to suggest that the outcome of the adventure should be handed over to the dice. (Most DMs need no lectures about the role of dice in the game!) Rather, an NPC that must accomplish its goals through the process of adventuring can lend an element of excitement to the game for *both* the DM and the players. The DM can develop open-ended scenarios where virtually anything can happen, depending upon the interplay between PCs and NPCs. The players, unable to step back from the gaming table and say, "The end of this adventure was written before we even began it," will be thrilled at the prospect of holding more of their destiny in their own hands.

Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the DM seek to generate a lich with a specific personality and goals, but to place it into an adventure with several obstacles to overcome, other than the PCs. Of course the lich has a major objective, but it should have other concerns as well—concerns that smart PCs will

perceive and use in what should be a battle of wits as much as a battle of swords and spells.

This chapter can help the DM manage the lich in adventures. In the end, it should be possible to present a force of evil and deception so clever, challenging, engaging, and fun that the lich scenario will not be forgotten.

The Master Planner

This scenario is popular in spy-thrillers, where the hero(es) must piece together the plans of the adversary before thwarting him.

The master-planning villain hopes to achieve a specific and grand objective, but he does so by layering his intentions within a host of minor crimes designed to throw heroes off the scent. For example, a lich might launch a barrage of attacks upon a large library, only to steal an artifact on the other side of town. The PCs easily fend off the attacks (perhaps too easily), but they remain occupied with the defense of the library while the lich penetrates the superior defenses of the museum where the artifact lies.

Continuing with this example, the PCs should know about the artifact, including the fact that it is well protected, but they will be constantly accosted and cajoled by the librarian and other officials who insist that some volume of questionable value must be guarded like the crown jewels. Other clues might be sprinkled in liberally to subtly suggest that more goes on than meets the eye.

The DM's objective is to keep the PCs off balance, to divide their priorities, and to keep them guessing at the lich's true objectives. Remember: a villain who successfully decoys the PCs away from his true objective will gain their respect and lasting enmity, and he will provide an extended adventure for all to enjoy.

The Mysterious Stranger

This scenario is common to murder mysteries, providing the classic *whodunit* plot. The lich's penchant for secrecy and

its expertise in disguise provides excellent stuff for this kind of adventure. In this scenario, the PCs have no idea of what they are up against. There are multiple suspects, all up to something, and the lich is only one of them—the PCs don't know who the bad guy is.

The players should be initially unaware—completely unaware—that a lich is behind the troubles they are encountering. And once they discover that a lich is involved, they might well be led to think that some nasty person is the lich, either with or without the lich's help.

In this scenario, the lich will make extensive use of living and undead servants. Given that undead in Ravenloft are able to completely mask their thoughts (see the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set), the undead servants become especially effective in dealing with and deceiving players.

As the plan unfolds, the focus becomes the player characters' investigation of identities. Even at this point the players should still be unaware that a lich manipulates the plot. Just as the inhabitants of Ravenloft can live out their entire lives not knowing the true nature of their own ruler, so can the players go through almost all of the adventure blind to the *true* force behind their encounters.

Recruiter of Evil

In this scenario, the lich attempts to raise an army of vassaliches (see Chapter VII). At first this seems to be a good thing—evil wizards are disappearing left and right, and the countryside has not been so peaceful in years. Then, good wizards begin to disappear, too.

In a related scenario, a powerful, apparently good-aligned wizard seeks to recruit the PC wizard(s) to join his ranks and purge the countryside of evil. In reality, the “good” wizard is a lich who is attempting to make a vassalich of the PC. The lich tempts the wizard PC with great power, perhaps even helping him or her—and the rest of the PCs—to overcome another evil being in the area. As the lich gains the trust and swells the ambition of the wizard character, it begins to subtly turn the PC

against his or her comrades. For example, the disguised lich may invite the PC to join in a short adventure that advances the cause of good, and then reward the PC with a powerful magical item. In game terms, the DM would find ways for the PC to gain experience and even levels independently of the rest of the group, thus separating the character from his comrades in an attractive way.

Remember, if a PC embraces vassalichdom, even ignorantly, then the character becomes an NPC. The trick is not to encourage evil behavior, but to tempt the PC with enormous power. This particular scenario will take time to play out effectively, to avoid undue suspicion on all the players' parts, but it also can be the most dramatic of adventures.

War of the Superpowers

If the PCs are too weak to deal with a lich (as most should be), then the DM might create an adversary worthy of the lich and then use the PCs as pawns in an evil chess match between the two powerful adversaries. This scenario is not limited to a good vs. evil theme, either. Perhaps two liches vie for control of an item or artifact, or the lich and a vampire struggle for domination of one another. The PCs might find themselves in a position to switch sides repeatedly, as one monster and then the other gains the upper hand. Both evil creatures plan to kill the PCs once their ends have been served, but until then the player characters are valuable to both sides. If the PCs play their cards right, they may send both creatures to mutual destruction.

In all of the above suggested scenarios, the outcome of the adventure remains open to the influences of role-playing. When a monster of genius intelligence, like the lich, comes into play, the most realistic adventures will contain plots within plots within plots. A static lich in a trap-laden lair is just another monster, but a DM role-played lich makes the worthiest of foes.

Techniques of Terror

In a lich-related adventure, mystery should be a cornerstone of the PCs' sense of fear; as knowledge is the characters' strength, ignorance is their weakness and an excellent avenue in which to inspire terror.

For example, consider an exploit in which one of the player characters is kidnapped by the lich (a variant of the "recruiter of evil" scenario). When the players question the locals, they discover that a nearby swamp is "haunted," and that homes around the swamp are cursed—many who have entered the area have disappeared. The swamp is avoided both day and night. This gives the players an obvious place to start.

The players will eventually realize that a lich is at work, but the DM should maintain a sense of foreboding mystery as long as possible. Perhaps the kidnapped character turns up with no memory of where he or she has been, only to disappear again without a trace; this can go on repeatedly until the PCs are beside themselves with apprehension. If subtle signs of bizarre experimentation show up on the kidnapped character's body, the alarm is again heightened. In other words, keep throwing small details at the players that defy explanation. If the mysteries involve one or more of the PCs directly, so much the better. False clues are good, but frightening enigmas, such as a tell-tale surgical scar below the left ear, are even better.

Death of a Nonplayer Character

If players are made to feel that their characters' lives are genuinely at risk, then the game will be more interesting for everyone. The lich takes advantage of this basic aspect of human nature, which is why it has spells and abilities that are designed to make its lair appear as sinister and dangerous as it is. The DM should use this part of lich behavior to the fullest.

For example, walking into a cavern that is littered with the skeletons of fierce monsters

suggests that the inhabitant of the cave is particularly dangerous, and that the characters could very easily end up on the floor as well, for someone else to discover. The players will expect a particularly nasty threat to overcome, and will prepare themselves psychologically for its approach. They're ready to be thrilled.

Another excellent method of making PCs nervous is through the horrifying death of an NPC. To use this device, the DM should introduce a friendly character to the adventuring group and allow him or her to gain their trust and goodwill. Allow the NPC to save their lives once or twice, early in the adventure. Furthermore, allow the NPC to be at least as powerful as the strongest member of the group. This will subtly tell the players that they are tangling with mighty enemies (because the DM is giving them such a powerful "henchman"), thus raising the level of tension in the field, but it will also shock them when the NPC is suddenly, horribly killed before their eyes.

Death of a Player Character

Every DM has at one time or another has wished to kill off someone's character. There are a variety of reasons for such a desire, few of which are valid in light of more mature ways of keeping the character or the player from the game. In the RAVENLOFT® campaign setting, it is ironically even more inappropriate. Adventures in Ravenloft are more essentially plot-driven than in other worlds, and the arbitrary death of any character detracts from the mood and setting.

On the other hand, there are times when the DM will want to put the imminent threat of death into the players' minds, and that cannot be achieved if the possibility dying is not genuine. Most players do not expect to be subjected to no-win situations, so an effective way to frighten them is to put them into a hopeless predicament and then play it out very slowly. Let them see they are going to die and let them watch it happen little by little. For example, take a PC prisoner, strap him to a

table with a descending blade over his throat, allow his comrades to search for him, and make it obvious that rescue will probably be a few minutes too late.

The lich serves as a good vehicle for introducing this kind of terror. The undead wizard revels in death, and it has virtually no concern over the lives of mortals. In addition, the lich has a wide variety of methods with which to kill, from innate abilities to spells to an arsenal of magical devices.

General Mood and Surroundings

When the players first encounter a lich's lair, a deep sense of foreboding should be instilled in them. All things that are dark, sinister, depressing, black, and evil should be brought to the forefront of the senses. The key to evoking these feelings lies in the language of the DM when describing the setting.

For instance, if the lich is secluded within some ruins in the middle of a swamp, the following description might be employed:

Despite the fact that it is close to midday, you must light your lamps and torches to see ahead. As you do, shadows reluctantly part to reveal the ruins you have been searching for.

The broken walls have been almost entirely hidden by all manner of twisted growths and choking vines. The once tall and gleaming stone pillars and beautiful gables are now dilapidated, mossy wrecks. The structure seems to have crumbled from within, collapsed from neglect and from centuries of unchecked vegetation that snaked its way into the cracks of the walls and rended them into rubble.

Here, within the ruins, the smells of the swamp have dissipated slightly, and in their place is a most unusual, stifling odor, like that of a crypt freshly opened. It is a dank, slightly rotten stench that breathes forth from no apparent source.

Is it the chill of the swamp that grips your stomach like the hand of a dead man, or is it the dread within the very walls of this great castle, completely in the grasp of the swamp?

For all the PCs know, the ruins are completely empty and harmless. If the description is laced with verbs and adjectives which imply that the very surroundings are alive, the players may well assume that the walls might reach out and grab them. Every room can feel threatening, and every shadow can contain monsters made purely of the players' imaginations. The DM can repeatedly point out strange noises in the background that are actually harmless, even unrelated to the matters at hand, but the PCs' ignorance of the source will drive them crazy.

Even common objects can strike fear into player characters' hearts if described correctly. It is not enough for the DM to say "You see a chest against the west wall." In a horror adventure, the chest can be made threatening just by being there. Slight embellishments to common objects can make them eerie, and thus add to the atmosphere of the adventure. For instance, the DM might say:

You see an oddly proportioned chest resting a few feet from the west wall. You have not seen such a chest before. It has an almost cubic shape to it, and it has gold hinges and fittings. There are multiple scratch marks all over its dark wooden surface—what made them is impossible to say. You can see the latch plainly, but there is no padlock attached to it. There is an odd chill in the room that might be coming from the chest—but you can't be sure.

This raises all sorts of questions about the chest that have to be answered by the players' imaginations until they actually open it. While their imaginations are working, they will construct their own suspense. After a few narratives like this, the players will hesitate to pick up a rock from the ground, for fear of rousing the master evil villain from its lair.

DMs who want to learn more techniques of terror would do well to consult Chapter XV in the rules book of the RAVENLOFT® boxed set.



Fear and Horror Checks

Sometimes, no matter how hard he or she tries, the DM simply can't evoke a sense of fear or horror in the players. While the DM attempts to establish the mood with a juicy bit of narrative, the players make jokes and laugh at the description (which, in fact, is a sign of fear).

This is the function of the fear and horror check: to force upon the player character those feelings that the player refuses to experience. These checks can be enormously debilitating, and the DM can impose penalties to dice rolls, to be sure that characters fail them. If the players refuse to role-play their characters or make light of every hair-raising sight they are introduced to, then the DM can tell them they will have to make these checks since they "obviously can't react properly to the situation."

After they fail a few of these checks and have to suffer the consequences, the players may change their minds about laughing in the face of death.

The Lich in the Long Term

It is possible for a group of adventurers to build their entire careers around defeating the plans of a single lich, as well as the monster itself. It also is possible for lower-level characters to defeat a lich without ever coming into direct contact with it. The plans that a lich puts into effect can be massive in scale, involving politics and diplomacy among nations, or they may be as modest as influencing the election of a village mayor. Players often can defeat a lich simply by defeating the minions who carry out its orders. This way, lower-level characters can tangle with a lich as can higher level ones, without facing certain death.

Of course, a lich defeated through its minions is still around to create more trouble for the characters, who will have to build up their strength and experience before they confront it directly. But the players should also be aware that, while they're developing their

abilities, so is the lich that they're hunting. . . .

If a long-reaching lich plot—one that will take many long nights of play and perhaps several character levels of adventuring to resolve—is desired, then the minions of the lich can change from adventure to adventure, always becoming more challenging, until the PCs are strong enough to face the lich itself. This assumes that the PCs don't know who the master planner is. They might go on for years, fighting diverse adversaries and going on long quests, only to discover in the end that they have been fighting representatives of the same enemy the whole time.

Imagine the players' startling revelation when they realize that a wizard they crossed and defeated when they were at the first or second level of experience has been behind *all* of their troubles. When they finally know the source of their woes and angrily vow to destroy him once and for all, they are again surprised to learn that he has since become a lich. Now they must fight their way through layer upon layer of defenses before they can finally settle the score. Such a campaign could last for years.

Lich Magic

In the realm of Ravenloft, a lich may be able (at the DM's discretion) to cast necromantic spells with much greater efficiency than those in other realms—sometimes even beyond the efficiency that necromantic spells already exhibit in Ravenloft. A general rule of thumb might be that all necromantic spells have either double the effect or half the casting time when employed by a lich in Ravenloft. The DM should determine what the effects exactly are in each situation, as some effects cannot easily be doubled. Note that these doubling effects refer to all spells listed anywhere, including those listed in the RAVENLOFT® rules book.

The DM should always check the rules concerning spells cast in Ravenloft (see pages 42-51 of the RAVENLOFT rules book)—even if a demilich casts a spell, it is still subject to the effects of the demiplane of dread unless otherwise noted.

Lich-Altered Spells

The following are variants of existing necromantic spells. For each spell listed, there is a corresponding spell listed in the *Player's Handbook*. The statistics for each spell, such as the casting time, components, duration, etc. remain the same unless otherwise noted. However, all spells should be considered a level higher than their common counterparts. Also, these spells were devised by liches, to be used by liches; they are inherently evil. Liches require particularly evil acts to attract the attention of the dark powers since they are already "part of the club," so to speak. Non-liches, on the other hand, are potential inductees. Therefore, any wizard who attempts to cast these spells will quite likely attract the attention of the evil land. Hence, non-liches who cast lich spells are subject to a Ravenloft powers check, perhaps with a 25% bonus to the chance of being noticed.

Greater Detect Undead (2nd level)

With this spell, a lich is able to detect all undead within range. Range is equal to the lich's Intelligence score in miles. Detection is omnidirectional and the lich need not remain stationary.

This spell is not hindered by obstacles of any kind. Furthermore, undead are not entitled to a saving throw, enabling them to avoid detection.

Improved Chill Touch (2nd level)

This spell improves upon the damage and effects of *chill touch*. The target must save vs. spell or suffer 1d10 points of damage and become paralyzed from the extraordinary pain and cold. The paralysis lasts in hours equal to the amount of damage caused. Victims who fail to successfully save also lose 2 points of Strength and Constitution, and a full day is required to regain a lost point of each attribute.

This spell will also destroy any undead creature that has less than 3 Hit Dice, but if the undead makes a successful saving throw vs. spell, there is no effect.

Sinister Cantrip (2nd level)

Cantrips normally are used to produce innocent parlor tricks. This spell is similarly harmless, in terms of physical effects, but it can be used to create a sinister trick or illusion that strikes fear or disturbs the psyche of those who see it.

Sinister cantrip is a favorite prank among vassaliches, testing their new form.

Some typical applications of this spell are an illusion of insects crawling out of prepared food, a nagging itch in an impossible-to-reach spot, an illusion of bleeding from the fingernails, and altering the pitch of a victim's voice to make it sound like growling.

Skeletal Hand (3rd level)

This spell is similar to the *spectral hand* spell, but the image of the hand is that of a skeleton instead of a ghostly one. The lich can cast touch spells of 4th level or less through the hand. In addition, the *skeletal hand* can deliver physical blows by making a normal attack. The lich receives a +4 bonus to its die roll, and a successful hit inflicts 1d10 points of damage.

The hand may be attacked, but it can be damaged only by weapons of magical enchantment. Any damage ends the spell and inflicts 1d4 points of damage upon the caster. The hand can be kept at bay by a priest of good alignment by attempting to turn the hand as an undead creature with 2 Hit Dice.

The lich may move about while it controls the hand, but it may not make other attacks.

Destroy Undead (4th level)

A powerful variation of *hold undead*, *destroy undead* disintegrates undead creatures with Hit Dice equal to or less than the casting lich.

Undead that have less than 3 Hit Dice are automatically destroyed. Undead with 4 or more Hit Dice are allowed a saving throw vs. spell. If successful, the targets suffer 5d10 points of damage. If unsuccessful, they are destroyed. At the DM's discretion, vampires, mummies, and other high-level undead may be partially or completely unaffected by this spell.

Feign Destruction (4th level)

Similar to *feign death*, this powerful spell allows the lich to simulate its own destruction. When badly wounded, the lich may cast this spell.

Once done, the lich's body crumbles to dust, and detection spells or abilities will indicate that its spirit has returned to its phylactery. In reality, the lich's body has *teleported without error* to a secret location. At the same time, a pile of dust and bones has teleported from that same secret location, replacing the original.

Iron replicas of the lich's non-cloth possessions can be forged and placed on the dust-lich, to be teleported with it. The replicas bear only the shape of the items they replace, not the color. For example, a magical crown adorned with gems will be replaced with an iron one, the gems also made of iron.

The range of the spell, that is, the furthest distance that the lich can be from its mock body, is equal to the lich's Intelligence score times 1,000 feet.

Lich Armor (4th level)

This spell works as the *spirit armor* spell, with the following exceptions: Instead of a shimmering aura, the armor takes the form of a black shroud which mystically flows about the body of the lich. The armor offers the protection of plate mail (AC 3), and its protection is cumulative with the effects of other armor and magical devices. When it dispels, the lich suffers 2d6 points of damage instead of 2d3.

Lich Touch (4th level)

A step above *vampiric touch*, this spell inflicts 9d6 points of damage upon a successful attack. In addition, damage inflicted by this spell cannot be healed by spell magic or by a magical item, but normally or by magical potion only. Any added points over the lich's normal total are treated as temporary hit points that dissipate after one day.

In all other respects, this spell is the same as the *vampiric touch* spell.

Mass Contagion (5th level)

The effects are the same as the *contagion* spell's, except that it affects a mass of living persons within a 10-foot radius, instead of just one individual. The number of people who can be affected is equal to the lich's Hit Dice.

Persona of Death (5th level)

This spell is a variant of *mask of death*. This spell is generally cast in conjunction with *animate dead*. When cast, it not only makes a corpse appear to be person, but (if animated) he or she will sound and behave like (have the mannerisms of) that person, making an almost perfect duplicate. Of course, the lich must have a good idea of what the duplicated person sounds and acts like. The persona will be fairly superficial, but people who know the person being mimicked can be fooled. The corpse still has to be controlled, and it will not have any of the mimicked person's knowledge.

New Spells**Corruption (2nd level)**

Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S
Duration: 2 rounds
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: 1 person
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell inundates the target with an emotional flurry of corruption and greed. If the target fails a saving throw vs. spell, it temporarily succumbs to the temptations of dark power and becomes transfixed, lost among delusions of grandeur for the duration of the spell. After the spell expires, the target must roll another saving throw vs. spell or be predisposed to favoring the lich and what it stands for. If unsuccessful, the target will hesitate for one round if he or she attempts an offensive move against the lich or any of its minions or property. Until the victim succeeds his roll, the residual spell effect continues.

Death Sight (3rd level)

Range: 30 yards
Components: S
Duration: 5 rounds
Casting Time: 1
Area of Effect: 1 person
Saving Throw: Negates

The victim of this spell sees everyone around him as a walking corpse. The victim must make a fear check on the first round of effect, and he must make a horror check at the beginning of each subsequent round of the spell's duration if he succeeds the fear check.

Sleep of Horror (3rd level)

Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: Special
Casting Time: 7
Area of Effect: 1 person
Saving Throw: Negates

The victim of this spell is wracked with nightmares during his or her sleep, completely disrupting any restful effects such as recovering spells, hit points, or PSPs. A *sleep* spell will negate the effects of this, as will a successful save vs. spell. The victim will have 1d10 nightmares during the night, and he must make a horror check after each nightmare.

The material component of this spell is a pinch of black sand.

Stench of Death (3rd level)

Range: 30 yards
Components: V, S, M
Duration: 1 hour
Casting Time: 1 round
Area of Effect: 50-foot radius
Saving Throw: Negates

This spell fills the area of effect with a smell so foul as to cause complete disorientation among those caught within it. A successful save vs. paralyzation allows the character to remain within the stench, unaffected. Those who fail

their rolls will be overcome by the smell, double over, and remain unable to cast spells or fight. However, they may still flee the area of effect. Once outside of the stench, the victim requires a round of breathing fresh air before he can resume normal activities. As this effect is strictly magical, no wind will blow it away. It can, however, be *dispelled*.

The material component of this spell is a rotted body organ.

Bone Form (4th level)

Range: 3 yards

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1–20 hours

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: Sufficient bones for the spell

Saving Throw: None

When this spell is cast, the lich is able to create any object less than 3 feet long, high, and deep out of bone matter. The lich must have a supply of bones on hand to create whatever object it desires. Weapons can be created with this spell; if done, such weapons are considered evil, but they offer no bonuses to attack rolls.

The material components of this spell are enough bones to construct the desired item and a drop of body fluid (spittle, blood, etc.)

Bone Seize (4th level)

Range: 60 yards

Components: V, S

Duration: 1–10 rounds

Casting Time: 3

Area of Effect: 1 person

Saving Throw: Negates

With this spell, the lich can take control of the victim's bones. It does not matter whether the target is alive or dead. Control is awkward at best: The lich can make the target walk, lay, and sit down only. It cannot make the target fight, cast spells, speak, jump, etc.

Knoslira's Crypt (5th level)

Range: 30 yards

Components: V, S

Duration: 1–10 days

Casting Time: 8

Area of Effect: 50-foot radius

Saving Throw: None

This spell causes any inhabited structure to become sealed as a crypt. In effect, all exits are *wizard locked*. Then the interior begins to darken over a period of five rounds. No light, even magical, can function in the darkness, nor can infravision. When the structure is dark, a horrible musty smell of death permeates the area, prompting fear and horror checks. Optionally, the DM may call for madness checks (see the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set).

Sinister Surroundings (5th level)

Range: 0

Components: V, S

Duration: 1 month/Hit Die of the lich

Casting Time: 2 rounds

Area of Effect: 1-mile radius/Hit Die of the lich

Saving Throw: None

This spell does not change the look of the affected area as would a *hallucinatory terrain* spell. Rather, it is used to create a grim and dismal feel around the lich's lair. Non-evil characters suffer a –1 penalty to fear and horror checks within the area of effect.

Zone of Despair (5th level)

Range: 0

Components: V, S

Duration: 1–6 hours

Casting Time: 8

Area of Effect: 100-foot radius

Saving Throw: Negates

Unless a saving throw vs. spell is successfully rolled, characters entering the area of effect become depressed and suffer –4 penalties to their initiative rolls. Any emotion-controlling spell, as well as *dispel magic* will negate the effect upon a character.

Bones of the Earth (6th level)

Range: 10 yards

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1d20 + 10 days

Casting Time: 3 rounds

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: None

With this spell, the lich is able to create minor structures out of subterranean materials. When cast, a structure, not more than 20 feet high and 10 feet wide at the base per Hit Die of the lich, rises from the ground. The structure is simple and solid, and it can appear in any form the lich desires. It takes two rounds to form, and is always accompanied by extremely loud rumblings. The structure lasts for the duration of the spell, after which it recedes back into the ground.

Multiple structures can be created, but they are divided among the lich's total available mass. For example, an 11-HD lich could create one 220-foot tall structure, or eleven 20-foot tall structures.

The material components for this spell are a stone and a weed.

Disrupt Dominion (8th level)

Range: 20 yards

Components: V, S

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: Special

Saving Throw: Negates

By casting this spell, a lich attempts to take control of undead creatures from another commanding entity. The creature in control of the undead rolls a saving throw vs. spell. If successful, control of the undead is uninterrupted. If unsuccessful, the lich has clouded the undead with assorted negative energy patterns that disrupt control. The undead do not automatically become the lich's minions, but it is free to exert its will upon them and assume control in subsequent rounds.

Ghoul Lattice (8th level)

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: 100 yards/Hit Die of the lich

Saving Throw: None

Stealing corpses from graveyards for raw materials can be a time consuming task without the use of this spell. Casting it creates a small tunnel that extends chaotically from the point where the spell was cast and then divides into a series of shafts, connecting with any number of graves or other subterranean pockets within the area of effect. The tunnels are 4 feet in diameter and circular, and they are situated an average of 6 feet below the surface. The tunnels intersect in a maze like fashion, but the only place where they emerge at the surface is at the point where the lich stands. (If the lich casts the spell underground, then the tunnels never reach the surface.) The spell creates a random latticework of tunnels through which the lich can summon new minions or harvest necromantic spell components.

The material components for this spell are a long fingernail and a pinch of dirt from a grave.

Graft Flesh (8th level)

Range: 0

Components: V, S

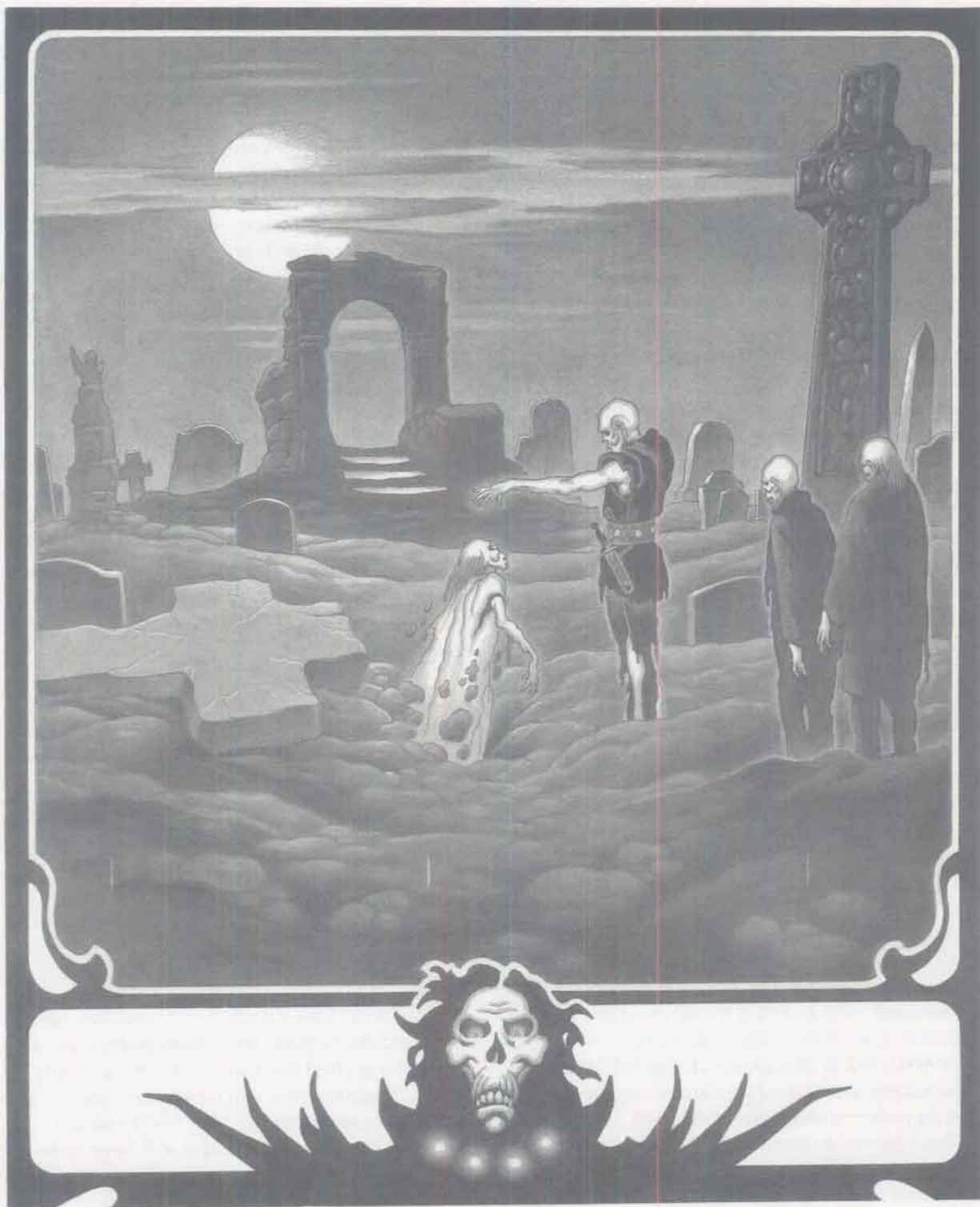
Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: The lich

Saving Throw: Negates

Should a lich fall victim to a vorpal weapon or otherwise lose a limb, it can cast this spell and graft body parts from dead bodies on to its own; the grafted limb will function normally. At the DM's discretion, a lich can even graft additional appendages to its body and use them—obviously, its abilities will have to be specifically adjudicated. Also, the sight of such a creature will certainly evoke a horror check!



Graft Item (8th level)

Range: 0

Components: V, S

Duration: Permanent

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: The lich

Saving Throw: Negates

This spell is similar to the *graft flesh* spell, allowing the lich to graft any item, magical or otherwise, to its flesh. The attachment is instantaneous and permanent. There is no way to remove the object short of cutting it off.

Simulate Skill (8th level)

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 1d10 + 10 hours

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: The lich

Saving Throw: None

After casting this spell, the lich is able to use any weapon or nonweapon proficiency that a dead character possessed in life. The character cannot be more than twelve hours dead, and the lich must have witnessed him or her using the proficiency in order to know that it exists. The character is not deprived of the simulated ability, so a resurrected warrior whose skill with arms has been imitated will still have them.

The material components of this spell are a magnet and a piece of reflective glass.

Wave of Death (8th level)

Range: 0

Components: V, S, M

Duration: 2 rounds

Casting Time: 5 rounds

Area of Effect: 1-mile radius

Saving Throw: None

When a lich casts this dreadful spell, all vegetable matter within the area of effect withers and dies over a two-round period. The death is irreversible and unpreventable, and is quite a shocking event to behold, requiring a

horror check for all who see it. Druids and rangers make their checks with a -4 penalty.

The material components for this spell are a flower and a drop of poison.

Confer (9th level)

Range: Touch

Components: V, S, M

Duration: Special

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: None

This spell is cast in conjunction with *create minion* for the purpose of creating a quasimancer (see Chapter VII). When the *confer* spell is cast upon the created minion, the undead creature's mind becomes attuned to spell memorization. The lich can then plant the spell repertoire of a 9th-level wizard (including number of spells and levels) within the minion's mind. The quasimancer can then cast the implanted spells at its discretion, as if it were the wizard who memorized them.

The lich must expend spell energy equal to the level of the spell placed in the quasimancer's head. In other words, to place a 5th-level spell in the quasimancer, the lich must expend the equivalent of a 5th-level spell from its daily allowance of carried magic. The quasimancer can receive spells from its master only once; when all of its spells are cast, it becomes a mindless undead.

Note that the quasimancer must have all spell components necessary to cast the spells implanted in its mind. This spell cannot be cast upon any other creature than one raised by a *create minion* spell. Casting it upon a living person will instantly cause insanity that can be cured only by *psychic surgery* or a *wish*.

The material components of this spell are the minion and a bit of brain tissue from a sentient being.

Create Minion (9th level)

Range: 10 feet

Components: V, S, M

Duration 1–20 days

Casting Time: 1 round

Area of Effect: 1 creature

Saving Throw: Special

This spell is used in conjunction with *confer* in order to create a quasimancer (see Chapter VII). When the lich casts *create minion*, a corporeal undead minion is animated and reinstated with a portion its former life essence, giving it artificial intelligence and spellcasting potential. In terms of physical traits, the minion becomes, in effect, a wight, having all the abilities and statistics of that creature (see the *Monstrous Compendium*). The newly created minion is entitled to a saving throw vs. spell (as a 5 HD creature) to avoid falling under control of the lich. If it succeeds, it will do its best to escape the lich and then go on a killing spree, resentful of the knowledge that its time of existence is limited. (Some created minions may attempt to find a wizard and force him to cast *permanency* upon them, thus negating the 1–20 day expiration of the spell.) A minion who fails its saving throw falls under complete control of the lich and can act as its master's agent in the field. Its intelligence allows it to command other undead in its master's name, and it remains susceptible to the *confer* spell.

Created minions under a lich's control make all saving throws at the level of their master; they are immune to *enfeeblement*, *polymorph*, *electricity*, *insanity*, *charm*, *sleep*, *cold*, and *death* spells; they exude a *fear* aura, 5-foot radius, requiring a successful save vs. spell or flee for 2d4 rounds.

Casting this spell upon a living person will require a successful save vs. death magic or the person immediately dies, becoming a created minion entitled to the saving throw detailed above.

The material components of this spell are the body to be raised and a bit of brain matter.

New Magical Items

Below are magic items that have been created in Ravenloft by liches. They are neither artifacts nor relics, as they can be created by any lich—in fact, any mage—who has the knowledge to do so. However, any mage who attempts to create one should make a Ravenloft powers check. None have any XP value.

Torc of Craftsmanship

This cursed ring cannot be removed by any means short of a *wish*, except by a lich. While the wearer lives, he receives a +2 bonus to saving throws vs. spells of the necromantic school. When the wearer dies, however, the ring automatically absorbs all of the nonweapon proficiencies the person possessed in life. When the ring is, in turn, worn by another person or by a lich, the skills it absorbed become available to the wearer. Only nonweapon proficiencies are available for absorption; spells and weapon proficiencies are excluded. However, the skill to read, write, and speak foreign languages and scrolls are absorbed and can be used by the wearer. (A conversation generally constitutes a use, as does reading a scroll or sign.) The ring cannot enhance a skill already possessed.

Central to the functioning of the ring is a ruby set in its center. Should the gem be taken from the ring, all of the skills are lost and the ring becomes nonfunctional.

The ring may be used to perform up to thirty functions. After the thirtieth task is performed, it becomes jewelry of 500 gp value. The ring cannot be recharged, but it can be put on a different victim, whose skills will be absorbed into the ring. The wearer has no method of knowing how many proficiency uses the ring contains unless a careful record is kept.

These *torcs* are quite commonly employed by liches when they have the opportunity to capture live people. Note that the *torc* does not deprive the living person of skills, but merely copies what is within the person.

Crown of Summation

This ruby-studded circlet is similar in function to the *torc of craftsmanship*. Instead of capturing skills, however, the *crown* absorbs the wearer's memories. If the item is placed upon the head of a character within one hour of his death, all of the character's thoughts from the previous 1d6 days are transferred into the gems. The *crown* may then be placed upon another head, and all recorded events are played out in detail for the wearer.

Should a living person put on the *crown*, 1d4 levels of experience are drained into the rubies. They may be regained by removing the *crown* and putting it on again, but the levels are otherwise lost and cannot be regained by any means short of a *wish*. If another creature puts on the *crown* after levels have been drained into it, they merely experience the memories of the previous wearer as described above; they do *not* gain the lost levels of experience. Note that those absorbed levels also are lost if another person wears the *crown*—the drained character cannot regain his lost levels if another creature puts on the *crown* before he does so again.

The second wearer experiences the memories of the first as if he were actually living them. The *crown* transfers senses and emotions to the wearer. Physical occurrences are experienced, but their effects are not translated into actual effects on the wearer. However, psychological experiences are lasting. For example, if the memory contains a failed *horror* check, the wearer will experience the effects of it even after removing the *crown*. All actions are displayed at the rate of one day's memories per round. The *crown* functions only once, and then it becomes a piece of common jewelry worth 1,000 gp. It cannot be recharged.

A lich might typically use such a device to determine how an infiltrator came to find its lair, who his comrades are, and by what means he arrived. The *crown* also may be used to become familiar enough with a person to effect a successful impersonation.

Ring of Izmur

This is a magical item that combines the effects of a *ring of free action* and a *time stop* spell. It also provides a bonus of 3 to the Armor Class of the wearer. The *time stop* spell may be used up to three times per day, but not for more than ten uses altogether. The Armor Class benefit remains in effect until the wearer is successfully struck by an enchanted melee weapon, whereupon the bonus is lost. The *free action* aspect of the *ring* is continuous and permanent.

Those within the 15-foot radius of effect of the *time stop* spell are entitled to a saving throw vs. wand. Successful rolls negate the effects of the *time stop*.

Eye of Donoagi

Donoagi is a fabled ancient evil dragon made of stone. Legend reports that she has been long asleep, awaiting a time when her faithful *stone priests* will construct an elaborate temple and cast a succession of powerful spells to reawaken her, allowing her return to the world.

The *eye of donoagi* is a 3"-diameter amulet that resembles a large tiger's eye. It has three functions: First, the *eye* allows the wearer to meld directly into stone and re-emerge at another point up to 100 feet distant, three rounds after the *melding*. While the wearer remains within the stone, he is invulnerable to all forms of attack, both mental and physical. For all practical purposes, the wearer ceases to exist for a short period time. However, a *stone shape* spell cast within one round upon the surface where the owner disappeared will inflict 3d6 points of damage upon him. Second, the *eye* also allows the wearer to phase through stone up to 2 feet thick at will. Finally, the *eye* will automatically transform any stone statue into a stone golem under the control of the owner (once per day).

A lich who forges the amulet is automatically able to manipulate it. Others must eat a stone before the amulet works for them. It can be used up to five times a day.

Nails of Rending

These are prosthetic, 3"-long fingernails found in sets of five or ten. The nails are concealed within 1/2" tubes into which the tips of the fingers are put, whereupon they bind themselves to the wearer forever—the wearer's fingers may be cut off to remove them, but not the nails. For a lich, this is not of great consequence or pain. For a living person, however, a horror check is required: failure results in unconsciousness for 1d20 minutes, in addition to the effects described in the rules book of the RAVENLOFT® boxed set. Also, the pain is extreme, requiring the wearer to roll his Constitution score or less or permanently lose 1 point of that attribute. (A *restoration* spell will return the affected character's Constitution score to normal.) The pain only lasts for a few minutes, but bonding is instantaneous—regardless of the outcome of the horror and "pain" checks, the nails replace the person's natural fingernails.

These nails afford the wearer an additional 1d6 points of damage in barehanded melee attacks. In addition, when the nails strike armor, they have a chance to rend it, reducing the Armor Class benefit of that piece of armor by 1. Magical armor is entitled to a saving throw vs. lightning to avoid the effects (see table 29 in the DMG).

After the nails are worn for a few days, the wearer's hands, if they are not so already, become shriveled and grotesque, and appear dead. Even the application of but one nail will evoke this effect.

There is no method, short of employing a *wish* spell, to remove the nails once they are applied. If a *wish* is used to remove the nails, the wearer's hands will remain shriveled unless a *restoration* spell is cast upon them. This will restore the hands to their proper appearance.

The ends of the nails are made of metal, but they are as sensitive as the fingers they are attached to. Liches and other undead are immune to the pain of bonding and have no sensation from the nails.

Potion of Spirit Flight

This potion causes the imbiber's spirit to depart its body. The physical body instantly dies and can only be resuscitated by a *resurrection* spell. Psychically, the effects are similar to the spell *astral travel* in that the drinker is now a disembodied, spiritlike creature floating about the Prime Material plane, invisible to normal sight and unable to communicate.

While in this form, the drinker is effectively removed from reality, unable to affect the physical world, and unable to be affected by it. The spirit is invulnerable to all forms of attack and is invisible to all forms of detection except through spells or devices designed to detect the presence of the alignment of the drinker. (Note that this spell is largely ineffective in Ravenloft.)

As stated, the spirit of the imbiber is unable to return to its body unless a *resurrection* spell is cast upon him. While in this state, he only is able to observe the physical world and travel to the astral plane at will. (Again, in Ravenloft *astral travel* is impossible.) If the astral plane is entered, it is vulnerable to any hazards endemic to that environment. Otherwise, the spirit will continue to exist for as long as its body is intact.

There is one circumstance in which the disembodied spirit is able to affect the physical world: The spirit is able to appear as a ghostly, visible form within mirrors. The spirit may not appear in any magically enchanted mirror, however. While visible, the spirit is able to move and make any gestures it desires within the confines of the mirror. Likewise, the spirit may appear at any size or scale within the mirror desired. The ghostly image can be maintained for 1d20 seconds each hour, after which the spirit must rest from the exertion of crossing planar boundaries, if only superficially.

Verbal communication is impossible, and the spirit and people in the physical world are unable to hear each other. Not even a *speak with dead* spell will aid in this endeavor.

CLIMATE/TERRAIN:	Any land
FREQUENCY:	Very rare
ORGANIZATION:	Solitary
ACTIVITY CYCLE:	Night
DIET:	Psionic energy
INTELLIGENCE:	Supra-genius (19-20)
TREASURE:	A
ALIGNMENT:	Any evil
NO. APPEARING:	1
ARMOR CLASS:	0
MOVEMENT:	6
HIT DICE:	9+18
THACO:	11
NO. OF ATTACKS:	1
DAMAGE/ATTACK:	1d8+2
SPECIAL ATTACKS:	Psionics, <i>mind struck</i> power, psionics-draining touch

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Psionics, spell immunities, struck only by +1 or better weapons, phylactery

MAGIC RESISTANCE:	Nil
SIZE:	M (6' tall)
MORALE:	Fanatic (17-18)
XP VALUE:	16,000

PSIONICS SUMMARY:

Level	Dis/Sci/Dev	Att/Def	Score	PSPs
20	6/10/25	all/all	18	82

Clairsentience—*Sciences:* aura sight, object reading; *Devotions:* spirit sense.

Psychokinesis—*Devotions:* animate shadow.

Psychometabolism—*Sciences:* death field, life draining, shadow-form; *Devotions:* aging, cause decay, displacement, ectoplasmic form.

Psychoportation—*Sciences:* teleport; *Devotions:* astral projection (if not in Ravenloft), dimensional door, dream travel.

Telepathy—*Sciences:* domination, mindwipe, psychic crush, tower of iron will; *Devotions:* contact, ego whip ESP, id insinuation, inflict pain, intellect fortress, mental barrier, mind bar, mind blank, mind thrust, psionic blast, thought shield.

Metapsionics—*Sciences:* empower; *Devotions:* psionic sense, psychic drain, receptacle, wrench.

These powers are common to psionic liches, but it is not unusual for some to have different powers.

There are few who dare to argue that the power of a master psionist is any less than that of an archmage. Proof of this can be found in the fact that the most powerful psionists are actually able to extend their lives beyond the spans granted them by nature, just as powerful wizards are known to do.

Psionic liches look much like their magical counterparts. Their flesh has mummified, pulling it tight over their bones and giving them a gaunt, skeletal appearance. Their eye sockets are empty and burn with crimson pinpoints of light. Often, a psionic lich will be found in the clothes it favored in life. Because this can be anything from the grand robes of nobility to the plate armor of a mighty knight, it is impossible to spot these creatures by their garb. (Metallic armor, if worn, will lower the lich's psionic power score, as per *The Complete Psionics Handbook*, page 16; small shields will not do so.)

Psionic liches retain the abilities that they learned in life: languages, proficiencies, thieving skills, etc. Further, a psionic lich who was human may actually have been a dual-class character in life, and thus be able to employ psionic powers plus magical or clerical spells. Creatures with such abilities are rare, thankfully, but are truly terrible opponents.



Combat: Psionic liches seldom engage their foes personally, as they surround themselves with legions of minions. Many adventurers hence never learn the true nature of their enemy. When forced to engage in direct combat, however, psionic liches are among the most deadly opponents that any band of heroes is ever likely to face.

The emanations of power that shroud a psionic lich are detectable even by those without psychic powers. Those who come within 50 yards of such creatures will be affected by this aura, requiring a save vs. spell or become mind struck. Such characters make all attack and damage rolls at a +2 penalty and must double the casting time of any spells (which allows saving throws for victims at +2). The effects of this aura can be countered by any spell or psionic power that would diminish or remove fear or inspire bravery.

If the lich is able to deliver a touch attack in combat, the malignant aura of psionic power that encircles it rips at the opponent's life force, causing 1d8+2 points of damage. In addition, psionic characters will find their PSPs drawn away. Each physical blow will strip the victim of a number of PSPs equal to twice the number of points of damage the blow inflicted. This loss is not permanent, and the PSPs can be regained through normal means.

Just as normal liches have spent decades or even centuries in the research of new and unique magical powers, so too do the undead masters of the mind have powers undreamed of by mortal men. It is not all uncommon for adventurers who come across these dreaded creatures to be confronted with psionic powers that have never been documented elsewhere. (These new powers will conform to the general standards established in the *Complete Psionics Handbook* for function, damage, area of effect, range, etc., but may differ greatly from standard powers in terms of the effects that they cause. Insight into the creation of new psionic powers can be gleaned from the section on spell research in the *DMG*. Further information can be gained from the *Forbidden Lore* boxed set for the RAVENLOFT® setting.)

Further, liches are able to employ magical items just as they did in life and may have quite a formidable collection of enchanted trinkets to use against adventurers.

It is important to note that psionic liches differ from the traditional ranks of the undead. Because the force sustaining them is mental and not mystical, they are far more resistant to spells, spell-like powers, or psionic sciences and devotions involving *charm*, *fear*, or the like. Treat them as having the equivalent of a 25 Wisdom for purpose of determining what spells they are resistant to (see the *Player's Handbook*, page 17, Table 5). Spells like *sleep* or *finger of death*, which base their effects upon a biological function in the spell recipient, also do not affect psionic liches; again, psionic powers similar to these spells are also ineffective (e.g., *life detection*).

Psionic liches can be turned by priests, paladins, and similar characters, but since they are not magical in nature, they are more resistant to this power than are other undead. Thus, they are turned on the "special" row of the Turning Undead table. Psionic liches are immune to harm from normal weapons but can be struck by weapons of +1 or better power. Spells or other powers based upon cold have no effect upon them. Other spells inflict normal damage on the lich. Psionic liches can be attacked in normal psionic combat, except as noted before.

In order to protect itself from destruction, a psionic lich employs a special form of phylactery (see "Ecology") that houses its life force. Although a lich may be defeated in combat, it cannot be truly destroyed unless its phylactery can be found and obliterated. As most liches will take great care to protect these vital objects from the prying hands of heroes, this can be quite a challenge.

Habitat/Society: Psionic liches are powerful espers who have left behind the physical demands of life in pursuit of ultimate mental powers. They have little interest in the affairs of the living, except as they relate to the lich's search for psychic mastery and knowledge. Those who encounter the lich usually do so when the creature feels that it must leave its self-imposed isolation for a time.

Psionic liches often hide themselves away in some place that "feels" safe to them. Since most of them can sense the auras and emanations of the world around them quite keenly, their judgment is usually sound. For the most part, however, these creatures will reside in places associated with death or learning. If the two can be combined in some way, all the better. For example, an ideal lair for a psionic lich might be the great library of a castle that was buried in a volcanic eruption long ago. Not only does the location bear the taste of death about it, for everyone in the castle was slain by the disaster, but it also has a solid foundation of knowledge for the lich to pursue research into the secrets of the mind.

When it comes out into the world, a psionic lich generally assembles a great network of minions. Curiously, these followers are seldom undead themselves. More often than not, they are young espers who seek to learn from an obvious master. What they often do not understand is that their leader has little interest in them apart from their role in any immediate plans. Once the master's goal has been accomplished, be it the retrieval of some ancient tome on psionic powers or the testing of a new psionic defense mode, the followers will be cast aside without thought. Those who do not simply leave when the lich demands it will probably find themselves mercilessly slain.

The first psionic lich encountered in Ravenloft was reported on the fringes of Bluetspur, the dread domain of the mind flayers, in the land of Kartakass. There is some evidence that the

creature was challenged and destroyed by Harkon Lukas, the master of that domain. Many scholars agree, however, that it seems probable that the lich escaped and survives to this day. Additional sightings of these horrible creatures leads one to believe that at least three more psionic liches have come into existence at various points in Ravenloft.

Ecology: Being undead, psionic liches have no place in the natural world as we know it. Although the power that transformed them is natural (not supernatural, like magic), the extent to which psionic liches have pursued their goals is not natural. By twisting the powers of their minds to extend their existence beyond the bounds of mortal life, psionic liches become exiles. Cast out from the land of the living, these creatures sometimes lament the foolishness that led them down the dark path of the undead.

By far the most important aspect of the existence of the psionic lich is the creation of its phylactery. To understand this mystical device, it is important to understand the process by which a psionicist becomes a lich. Before a psionicist can cross over into the darkness that is undeath, he must attain at least 18th level. In addition, he must be possessed of a great array of powers that can be bent and focused in ways new to the character.

The first step in the creation of a phylactery is the crafting of the physical object that will become the creature's spiritual resting place. Phylacteries come in all shapes, from rings to crowns, and from swords to idols. They are made from only the finest materials and must be fashioned by master craftsmen. Generally, a phylactery is fashioned in a shape that reflects the personality of the psionicist. The cost of creating a phylactery is 5,000 gp per level of the character. Thus, a 20th-level psionicist must spend 100,000 gp on his artifact.

Once the phylactery is fashioned, it must be readied to receive the psionicist's life force. This is generally done by means of the metapsionic empower ability, with some subtle changes in the way the psionicist uses the power that alters its outcome. In order to complete a phylactery, the psionicist must empower it with each and every psionic ability that he possesses. Although an object cannot normally be empowered with psychic abilities in more than one discipline, the unusual nature of the phylactery allows this rule to be broken. However, before "opening" a new discipline within the object, the would-be lich must transfer all of his powers from the first discipline into it. For example, if a character has telepathic and metapsionic abilities, he must complete the empowering of all of his telepathic powers before he begins to infuse the object with his metapsionic ones. Once discipline is "closed," it cannot be reopened.

During the creation of the phylactery, the psionicist is very vulnerable to attack. Each time that he gives his phylactery a new power, he loses it himself. Thus, the process strips away the powers of the psionicist as it continues. Obviously, the last power that is transferred into the phylactery is the empower ability. The effort of placing this ability within the phylactery drains the last essences of the psionicist's life from him and completes his transformation into a psionic lich. At the moment that the transformation takes place, the character must make a system-shock survival roll. Failure indicates that his willpower was not strong enough to survive the trauma of becoming undead; his spirit breaks up and dissipates, making him forever dead. Only the powers of a deity are strong enough to revive a character who has died in this way; even a *wish* will not suffice.



Van Richten's Guide to the Lich

by Eric W. Haddock

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