



Ravenloft

The Shadows of SITHICUS

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In the misty, forgotten reaches of the Multiverse lies a sinister, composite world known by many names: the Realms of Terror, the Demiplane of Dread, Ravenloft. While entering this dread realm is relatively easy, exiting is an altogether different matter, and the unfortunate souls who find themselves within its clutches soon learn that escape is all but impossible. The few travelers who have recently braved the Land of Mists have found themselves trapped within the domain of Sithicus, a dismal realm thrown into turmoil by the departure of its tyrannical ruler, Lord Soth.

THE INN IN THE MISTS

As with countless other worlds, the World Serpent Inn reaches into the Dark Domains. Each night, at sundown in Ravenloft, a portal in the inn's ever-changing back halls

fills with mists and manifests in a different location within the demiplane. The portal remains connected to that spot throughout the night, but vanishes with the sunrise the next morning (see the Random Domains sidebar). As a passage to countless other worlds, the World Serpent Inn is one of the few ways to escape the demiplane and as such, rumors of a mysterious, realm-shifting inn have inspired many foolhardy searches among the realm's populace. Anyone who does manage to find the inn can enter, with the exception of darklords, the prisoners of Ravenloft's domains, who are barred by some mysterious power.

While offering hope to the people of Ravenloft, the inn's connection to the Dread Realm poses a fearful threat to planar travelers. Patrons who enter Ravenloft, whether accidentally or out of morbid curiosity, immediately draw the attention of the Dark Powers, forces which might try to coax the

interlopers away from the inn's entrance. If a traveler fails to pass back through the inn's door before it vanishes with the morning, he finds himself trapped within the Demiplane of Dread.

SITHICUS

The domain of Sithicus formed around the infamous death knight Lord Soth in the year 720, according to the Barovian calendar. For thirty-two years, the Knight of the Black Rose ruled over the domain with cold indifference. While residing on the world of Krynn, the death knight had clung fiercely to his infamous history, but Sithicus was a place that threatened to rob Soth of his memories. He left much of the domain's day-to-day rule to his seneschal—the murderous dwarven werewadger Azrael Dak—and lost himself in magical reverie through the use of *memory mirrors*, magical creations that contained fragments of Soth's past.

In 752, plots by Azrael Dak and a young Vistani woman named Inza Magdova Kulchevich intertwined with supernatural events, leading to Lord Soth's departure from Ravenloft. (Scholars still debate whether the death knight escaped or was expelled after being broken by the Dark Powers.) Azrael declared himself king and took control of the fractured Sithican government. Inza, however, merged with the shadows of Sithicus's dreaded Great Chasm, becoming the domain's darklord and the true power within the realm.

The domain itself swiftly changed to reflect the new darklord. As Soth's prison, Sithicus perverted history and twisted memories. Inza's Sithicus, however, is a place where people can't forget their misdeeds. Sithicans dwell upon their sins and flaws, no matter how minor, and in doing so come to expect everyone to share their failings and imperfections. Paranoia and paralyzing distrust are the hallmarks of the current Sithican psyche. Even

visitors to the domain are afflicted by the "Guilt of Sithicus."

For Inza, her subjects' unease provides a welcome distraction from the truth that plagues her: nobility and innocence can and do exist, even within the Dark Domains. During her life, Inza betrayed everyone around her and justified her actions with her assumption that all others were just as grasping, just as corrupt, as she knew herself to be. As darklord, she has come to realize the truth—and that knowledge torments her.

To dim that pain, Inza seeks to subvert or destroy all nobility within Sithicus. She directs the weak-minded in her domain to snuff out whatever sparks of good burn in their neighbors' souls. A favorite tactic in recent months has been tricking noble Sithicans into falling afoul of King Azrael's secret police, the Politskarae. These unlucky souls quickly find themselves imprisoned in the squalid internment camp known as Sorrow. The camp houses more than one hundred good and honorable Sithicans considered subversives or potential threats to Azrael's despotic government.

THE DOMAIN OF SITHICUS

A place of thick, tangled woods and sharp, rugged mountains, Sithicus is a withdrawn realm with little interest in the outside world.

The domain's three largest settlements, Har-Thelen, Hroth, and Mal-Erek, are predominately populated by elves who prove hostile to strangers—especially those of less than pure elven descent. In recent years, resistance against the rule of the brutish King Azrael has grown among the elves, with the village of Mal-Erek as the center of the unrest. The king's soldiers still maintain order within the elven cities, but more and more often suffer from hit-and-run attacks by rebels. Only infighting between the three main elven enclaves has prevented them from organizing a wider revolt.

RANDOM DOMAINS

The following table provides DMs with a tool to decide in which of Ravenloft's domains characters who exit the World Serpent Inn appear, as well as determining where the inn appears next.

d%	Domain
1–3	Lamordia
4–6	Dementlieu
7–9	Falkovia
10–12	Keening
13–15	Tepest
16–18	Mordent
19–21	Necropolis
22–24	Valachan
25–27	Richemulot
28–30	Sithicus
31–33	Invidia
34–36	Borca
37–39	Barovia
40–42	Darkon
43–45	Kartakass
46–48	Forlorn
49–51	Hazlan
52–54	Nova Vaasa
55–57	Markovia
58–60	The Shadow Rift
61–63	Vechor
64–66	Verbrek
67–69	Bluetspur
70–72	G'Henna
73–75	Odiare
76–78	Souragne
79–81	The Nocturnal Sea
82–84	The Sea of Sorrows
85–87	The Amber Wastes
88–90	The Frozen Reaches
91–93	The Verdurous Lands
94–96	The Burning Peaks
97	The House of Lament
98	The Nightmare Lands
99	The Mists
00	DM's choice

LOST IN THE MISTS

Dare to learn more of RAVENLOFT's secrets? The adventure *Expedition to Castle Ravenloft* revisits the module that first entered the mists, while DRAGON #315, #339, and #348 present familiar locations, monsters, and spells from the Demiplane of Dread.



Those who find themselves in Sithicus might seek to explore some of the following locations.

The Giant's Cloak: The woods known as the Giant's Cloak received their name from the stone giant and his allies who utilized the thickly wooded area as a hiding place from both Inza's minions and King Azrael's soldiers. The woods are full of all manner of nonlethal traps.

The Great Chasm: The Great Chasm gapes in the heart of Sithicus like an open, festering wound. The chasm runs for dozens of miles north to south, and is up to as many as five miles across as its widest point. Sections are said to be bottomless, although few explorers have been foolish enough to test those claims. Fearsome creatures lurk within the rift, creeping forth when the sun sets. Inza Kulchevich also makes her lair somewhere within the Great Chasm, and from there she

plots the destruction of the noble and the corruption of all innocence within her domain.

Iron Warden: Although little more than a trading post, Iron Warden is a frequent stop for merchants traveling through the domain and explorers planning to investigate the Great Chasm.

Har-Thelen: While merely a village of five hundred souls, Har-Thelen is largely accepted as the capital of Sithicus. Trade along the Musarde River and Merchant's Slash make the community the most tolerant of outsiders, but nonelves are still shunned and mistrusted.

Hroth: The largest community in Sithicus and home to nearly a thousand residents, Hroth lies on the edge of a boggy land where terrible things are rumored to crawl and slither.

Kendralind: This hidden town lies deep within the tangled Fumewood. The residents are halflinglike crea-

tures from the world of Krynn called kender. In their homeland, kender are fun-loving wanderers, but their time in Sithicus has left this group violent, bitter, and, in many cases, afflicted with vampirism.

Mal-Erek: Nearly five hundred elves reside in this xenophobic community. The Library of Mal-Erek here is a place of rotted, forgotten lore and ruined secrets.

Ruins of Nedragaard Keep: On the night Lord Soth departed Sithicus his castle was destroyed. The ruins of Nedragaard Keep now stand upon a spire within the Great Chasm. The stone bridge that once spanned the rift is gone, so reaching the ruins is all but impossible. The ruins are the home of the Blessed Knight (see sidebar). When he wishes to leave the ruins a ghostly bridge forms across the Great Chasm.

Sorrow: Azrael has avoided establishing a capital, instead moving

THE BLESSED KNIGHT, LORD SOTH

This noble figure is a supernatural double of the domain's former darklord, the knight Lord Soth—a warrior who was once given the chance to prevent the Kingpriest of Istar from causing the Cataclysm on Krynn and was cursed to live forever as a death knight when he failed (see page 36 of this issue). Rumors in Sithicus call this version of Soth the Blessed Knight, as he now wanders the domain doing good works and protecting innocents. This noble Soth was formed in the *memory mirrors* that once lined the death knight's throne room in Nedregaard Keep. When the cursed Soth left the domain and his castle was destroyed in the Hour of Screaming Shadows, the *memory mirrors* shattered and this noble image of Soth was set free. The presence of the Blessed Knight in Sithicus is like a dagger through Inza's black heart. He is, after all, a manifestation of the redemption that even a monster like Soth might have found, had he been willing to turn away from his sins and accept the possibility of mercy.

MEMORY MIRROR (LESSER ARTIFACT)

Once an indulgence of a dreaded villain, this 6-foot-wide by 3-foot-wide mirror was shattered into twelve fragments. While the bulk of the mirror's power resides in a single central piece held by the Blessed Knight, the other shards serve to empower the key piece and unlock its greater abilities. While broken, anyone who looks into the *memory mirror* sees a reflection of her past innocence and an image of her idealized self. These sights render her immune to the Guilt of Sithicus and Inza's guilt lash for a number of weeks equal to 1 + the number of shards fused to the central piece. The *memory mirror* glows with a soft white radiance when within 100 yards of another piece and shards held together bond seamlessly.

If all twelve pieces of the *memory mirror* are found and combined, a character who looks within becomes permanently immune to the Guilt of Sithicus and Inza's guilt lash. In addition, if Inza sees herself in the *memory mirror* she is sickened for 1 hour, during which time she loses her shadow form and shadow healing abilities and, perhaps, might be slain permanently.

through the kingdom in a chariot constructed of the bones and teeth of his enemies, but the rapidly expanding internment camp called Sorrow has become the domain's de facto political center. The camp's name is derived from the sobriquet the elves gave to Azrael: the Sorrow of Sithicus. The camp's buildings are constructed of stone mined from the Misttop Mountains by the ever-growing prison population. Any breach of the king's law can land a citizen in Sorrow, while visitors to the domain are frequently pressed into service as camp guards. Visitors who refuse the honor of joining Azrael's army find themselves among the prisoners, unless they can pay handsomely for their freedom.

Veldrava: Deep salt mines bore into the Misttop Mountains here.

Sinister whispers are said to murmur from within these pits' corrosive depths.

Yurt: This small village of four hundred stands within the neighboring domain of Kartakass. The people are far more welcoming than those in Sithicus.

THE GUILT OF SITHICUS

Any sentient being who passes through the borders of Sithicus and enters this dismal realm is afflicted by a state called in whispers the "Guilt of Sithicus." This preternatural guilt manifests itself as a domain-wide curse on all sentient, mortal creatures, imposing a -1 penalty on all Will saves and Wisdom-based skill checks for as long as the creature remains in Sithicus. No spell or ability can counteract

this penalty, but rumors report that the pieces of a broken relic tied to the previous darklord can loosen the guilt's effects.

ADVENTURES IN SITHICUS

Getting characters to leave the comfortable confines of the World Serpent Inn for the bleak and unwelcoming domain of Sithicus might prove a challenge. Here are a few ideas for getting PCs to cross the threshold into Ravenloft:

Blessed Knight: The Blessed Knight enters the World Serpent Inn and offers the characters a shard of the *memory mirror* (see sidebar) that created him, entreating them for aid. If the PCs take up the quest, they must locate the eleven other glass shards scattered in the Hour of Screaming Shadows. Half can be found in the ruins of Nedregaard Keep, a quarter in the Great Chasm, and the rest strewn throughout Sithicus. It's unlikely, however, that the domain's darklord, Inza, will allow the PCs to craft her doom unimpeded.

Ghosts of Ravenloft: As the characters relax in the inn's common room, familiar figures enter from the back halls—long-lost loves or dear family members dead for years. They describe a monstrous, shadowy captor in the world outside the inn, a creature that has trapped their souls. The phantoms beg the PCs to help them. Should the characters enter Ravenloft, the phantoms disappear, possibly as a trick of Inza, the Dark Powers, or some other malign force.

Press Gang: King Azrael's soldiers enter the inn and target the weakest creatures there as new recruits for the king's army. Because more soldiers wait outside, they try to drag the unwilling beings from the inn and do their fighting where the odds are more in their favor. While the battle is likely to end quickly once the inn's other patrons become involved, those taken into Ravenloft might have difficulty escaping.

INZA DARKLORD OF SITHICUS

This beautiful yet stern-featured Vistana looks no more than twenty winters old. Slender and pale skinned, her brightly-colored skirts and kerchief are contrasted by tresses the color of a dead, starless night sky.

INZA MAGDOVA KULCHEVICH, DARKLORD OF SITHICUS CR 16*

Female human rogue 6/wizard 8
NE Medium humanoid (unique)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; **Listen** +9, **Spot** +10

Languages Balok, Patterna, Luktar, Sithican

AC 22, **touch** 14, **flat-footed** 18; uncanny dodge

hp 57 (14 HD); **shadow healing**; **DR** 5/magic

Immune shadow immunity, *magic jar*, mind-affecting effects

Weakness daylight vulnerability, innocence vulnerability

Fort +5, **Ref** +11, **Will** +11; evasion

Spd 30 ft. (6 squares)

Melee +4 *dagger of wounding* +16/+11 (1d4+5 plus 1 point of Con damage plus poison/19–20)

Base Atk +8; **Grp** +9

Attack Options *guilt lash*, *sneak attack* +3d6

Combat Gear *potion of cure serious wounds*, *potion of haste*, three doses of Large scorpion venom

Spells Prepared (CL 8th)

4th—*animate dead*, *shadow conjuration*

3rd—*gaseous form*, *major image* (DC 16), *suggestion* (DC 16), *vampiric touch*

2nd—*cat's grace*, *darkness*, *invisibility* (DC 15), *summon swarm*

1st—*disguise self*, *mage armor*, *magic missile*, *obscuring mist*, *ventriloquism* (DC 14)

0—*detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 13), *mage hand*, *prestidigitation*

Abilities Str 13, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 17, Wis 16, Cha 18

SQ shadow affinity, shadow form, shadow healing, static burn, summon familiar (shadow asp)*, trapfinding, trap sense +2

Feats Alertness, Brew Potion, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Mobility, Scribe Scroll, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse

Skills Appraise +7, Balance +6, Bluff +13, Concentration +9, Craft (alchemy) +7, Craft (poison making) +9, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +8 (+18 to act in character), Escape Artist +8, Gather Information +10, Hide +15, Jump +6, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (local) +20, Listen +9, Move Silently +15, Search +8, Sense Motive +8, Sleight of Hand +8, Spellcraft +16, Spot +10, Survival +7, Tumble +13

Possessions* combat gear plus +3 *leather armor of invulnerability*, *Novgor* (+4 *dagger of wounding*), *amulet of life protection* (renders Inza immune to *magic jar* and mind-affecting effects), *ring of protection* +3, *crystal ball* with *detect thoughts*, *potion of neutralize poison*, *potion of water breathing*

Spellbook as above plus: 0—all, 1st—*chill touch*, *feather fall*, *identify*, *Nystul's magic aura*, *ray of enfeeblement*, *reduce person*, *shield*; 2nd—*detect thoughts*, *fog cloud*, *locate object*, *Tasha's hideous laughter*, *touch of idiocy*, *web*; 3rd—*deep slumber*, *dispel magic*, *nondetection*; 4th—*greater invisibility*, *lesser geas*

Daylight Vulnerability (Ex) Inza takes 1d4 points of nonlethal damage every round she is exposed to direct sunlight. This damage is lethal if she is in shadow form while exposed.

Innocence Vulnerability (Ex) The mere presence of true innocence pains Inza. She takes a –1 penalty on all attack rolls, checks, and saves made either to attack an innocent character, or to resist the attacks of an innocent character. While what defines an “innocent” character is largely left to the DM to decide, a simple way to define an innocent character is as a creature of good alignment who has never killed another sentient creature.

Shadow Affinity (Ex) Creatures like shadows and natives of the Plane of Shadow have helpful attitudes regarding Inza.

Shadow Immunity (Ex) Inza takes no damage from spells of the shadow subschool.

Static Burn (Ex) Inza cannot rest in the same location two nights in a row. If she attempts it, she is wracked with terrible dreams and gains no benefit from the night's sleep (regaining no hit points and being unable to prepare spells).

Guilt Lash (Su) As a standard action, Inza can force any sentient creature in Sithicus to relive the moments of its life it feels guiltiest about. The target must make a DC 27 Will save or be stunned for 1d4 rounds. This is a mind-affecting effect.

Shadow Form (Su) As a standard action, Inza can transform herself and all of her equipment into pure shadow. While in shadow form she is incorporeal, gains a +4 bonus on Hide checks in areas of shadowy illumination (but takes a –4 penalty in areas of bright illumination), and moves with perfect silence.

Shadow Healing (Ex) Inza heals 2 points of damage each round so long as she has at least 1 hit point and is within an area of shadowy illumination or complete darkness. If reduced to 0 hit points in combat, Inza automatically assumes shadow form and attempts to escape. She must reach an area of shadowy illumination or darkness within 1 hour or be destroyed. (She can travel up to 3 miles in 1 hour.) Once at rest in a darkened place, Inza is helpless. She regains 1 hit point after 1 hour, then is no longer helpless and resumes healing at the rate of 2 hit points per round. Even if Inza is destroyed, she reforms in a darkened cavern of the Great Chasm 1d4 weeks later.

*As a darklord of Ravenloft, Inza has a number of unique abilities beyond those of her race and equipment in excess of that normally available to one of her class level. These advantages are reflected in her CR. Inza is also accompanied by a shadow asp familiar, a creature that can be found in the *Fiend Folio*. ☐