



# The Black Banad

SAMPLE LAYOUT





Book 1

# The Black Banad











# Chapter 1

## THE BEGINNING

*"The dreams of the few control the will of the many. Let's hope your dream isn't as boring as the rest."*

*Majin, The Betrayer*

There is no shortage of belief systems that speak of death as simply the next phase in a soul's existence. Pick any sacred text from virtually any faith and you'll find a quote that starts along the lines of, "Death is not the end of life. It is merely a step forward..." And the thing is, they're not wrong. Death isn't the end. In fact, there are more Afterlives, Heavens, and Hells than any mortal mind could fathom. And those Afterlives are often chock-full of excitement and thrills. But what about those souls who aren't quite ready for all that?

**The Nyxian Guard:** The official army of Nox Valar. The Nyxian Guard differs from other units within the Godless Monarchy in one important aspect: its members never entered the Sunless Crossing through death. Comprised entirely of gargoyles, celestials, or planar travelers, all members of the guard have chosen to fight for the monarchy.

This adventure repeatedly asks the player characters to attempt saving throws and ability checks. However, rather than provide set DCs or expect the ST to invent an appropriate DC of their own, a table of adventure-appropriate DCs is provided here for reference. Each set of DCs has an associated tier of play, which is based on the tier you are running the adventure for. Within each set is an easy, medium, hard, and extreme DC, which should be applied when asked to do so by the adventure.

### ADVENTURE ABILITY CHECK & SAVING THROW DCs

#### Saving Throw DC's

Tier of play	Easy DC	Medium DC	Hard DC	Extreme DC
Tier 1	8	11	14	17
Tier 2	10	13	16	20
Tier 3	12	15	18	23
Tier 4	14	17	20	26

#### Ability Check DC's

Tier of Play	Easy DC	Medium DC	Hard DC	Extreme DC
Tier 1	9	12	15	19
Tier 2	11	15	18	23
Tier 3	13	18	21	27
Tier 4	15	21	24	30

**Reminder:** The characters do not have all of the same equipment they died with. Details on what items may have crossed over with them can be found in *Running the Adventure*.





### Read Out Loud:

*As Valen and Ashlynn approach, Johan emerges from the lodge and rushes to your side. They look to him and Valen says, "Shepherd, these are your wards?" Johan nods his skull and replies, "Yessir! We're lucky I found them and got them here when I did."*

### Whitestone Amulet

*Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)*

*A banshee's sorrowed heart captured in a thin silver chain with a white chilled gemstone.*

While you wear the amulet, your attacks are imbued with supernatural cold. When you deal damage to a creature with a weapon or spell attack, you can add 1d10 cold damage to the attack's damage and you take an amount of cold damage equal to the cold damage dealt.

*"The chain feels almost like a noose around your neck, yet loose enough to not cause too much discomfort. Its lineage was traced back to the Blackmorn family – a pendant gifted to the youngest daughter in a time of great strife within the household."*

## POSSESSIONS OF THE DEAD

If a player selects an item to bring with them into death that has no mechanical benefit (for example: a letter or signet ring), it is possible that the item may develop magical properties over time in the Sunless Crossing. After all, memory fuels the realm and strong attachments can prove incredibly potent, manifesting unique abilities. For example, at the Storyteller's discretion, a "lucky cup" may develop the ability to bestow Advantage to its owner under certain circumstances within the Sunless Crossing.

Once they are collected by the Shepherds, the dead are brought to the Junction—it is here that their introduction to the realm truly begins. They encounter sights and sounds like any living city.

Cooking food, warm hearths, and savory drinks are available to them and, surprisingly, seem to be every bit as filling and comforting as they were in life. In truth, these things are echoes of mortality. The food and drink are forged out of memories carried over from the realm of the living. The warm hearths are manifested from the essence of the Sunless Crossing, itself, their physicality made possible by the reinforcing memories of those who enjoy their comforts. Each time someone partakes of food in the Sunless Crossing, or uses a tool created there, the realm itself uses a portion of their memory to sustain its physical form and essence; often leading individuals to find a sense of familiarity in items they handle—a well-remembered burr worn into a chair or table, or a particular bump in the stone around a fireplace.

It is common for the newly dead to need a period of adjustment to learn the rules of the Sunless Crossing. During this time, the Shepherd who recovered them from the fields is an invaluable source of knowledge and support. One of the first things the newly dead discover is the fact that they still require rest and time to recuperate from exhaustion or injuries. As they are flush with the memory of life, their souls require time to rest as their bodies did in life. This means that the souls within the Sunless Crossing must still take long rests to heal or recover as well as to memorize spells or the like.



# Valen the Jade

*"I am a rider of lightning, child. Disrespect my charges again, and I'll cram a storm so far up you... your eyes will sparkle with energy."*

## Valen Social Statistics

**Description:** A wiry gargoyle carved out of pure sea foam jade towering over eight feet tall with a wingspan to match. Valen is often adorned with custom black full-plate mail made from wrought cold iron.

**Personality Traits:** Quiet in word and bold in action, Valen has grown slow of tongue with age and keeps often scathing comments locked within his thoughts.

- **Ideals:** Valor. Valen has borne witness to souls and Sovereigns for thousands of years in the Crossing. With time having little meaning for his perception, he holds valor as his ideal. Actions can cause you to be remembered for a millennium, and he hopes the same will be true for him.

- **Bonds:** Conflict. It is those who test steel and claw by his side that Valen forms close ties with. It matters not if it is a young soul holding a sword for the first time, or an experienced cut-throat—those who fight to survive earn his respect and friendship.

- **Flaws:** Emotion. The position of Arbiter is a heavy crown, for Valen believes he must be the classic image of a stoic gargoyle. Yet inside his jade heart he longs to scream, cry, love, and laugh with reckless abandon. His suppression of emotion sometimes bursts forth, often causing him to take flight from a social situation before anyone notices.

**Dos:** Have conviction. Valen cares less about what the mortal world defines as right or wrong, merely that a person have belief in their cause. Challenging Valen is a better way to earn his respect than folding.

**Don'ts:** Hurt Ashlynn. To such a long-lived gargoyle, there is little that bothers him—except emotionally, socially, or physically hurting Ashlynn. The Sovereign he has determined will be his last, for his life would have little meaning after her passing.

**Romance?:** Valen's heart belongs to another star-crossed lover. Nothing can shake this.

## Social Challenge DC: 24

- Easy DC: 21

- Medium DC: 24

- Hard DC: 26

## Social CR: 16 (15,000 XP)





# Void Ravager

*Medium aberration, unaligned*

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 49 (7d8 + 14)

**Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 feet

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12(+1)	16(+3)	14(+2)	6(-3)	8(-1)	16(+3)

**Saving Throws** Str +7, Cha +5

**Skills** Perception +3, Survival +3

**Damage Resistances** acid

**Damage Immunities** force

**Condition Immunities** charmed, frightened, stunned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

**Languages** Voidtongue

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP), **Proficiency Bonus** +2

## TRAITS

**Alien Mind.** The ravager's mind is beyond mortal comprehension. When the ravager attempts an Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma saving throw against a creature or a creature communicates telepathically with it for the first time in a turn, that creature takes 7 (2d6) psychic damage.

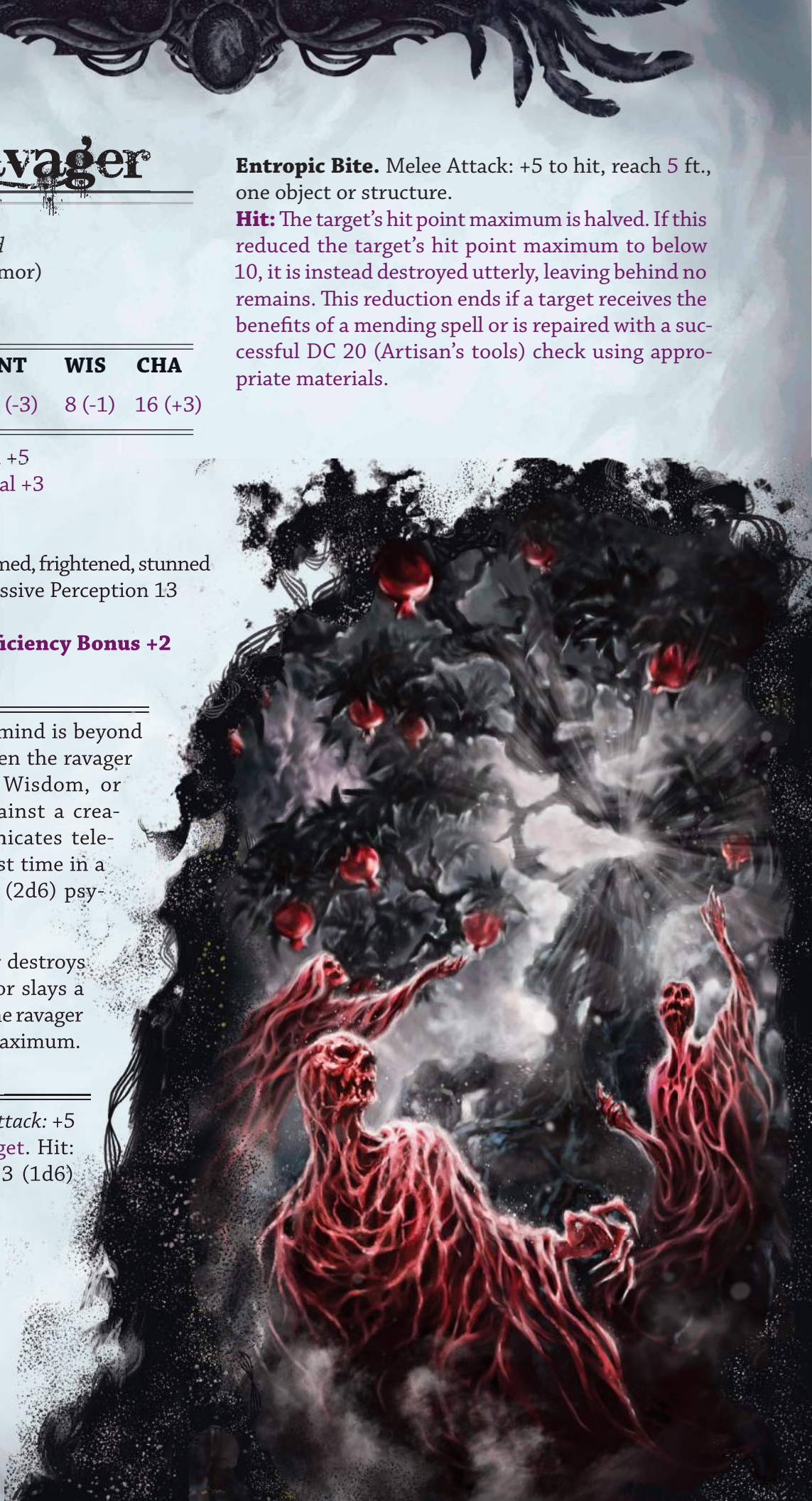
**World Eater.** If the ravager destroys a Medium or larger object or slays a Medium or larger creature, the ravager is restored to its hit point maximum.

## ACTIONS

**Tongue Tentacles.** *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., **one target**. Hit: 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing plus 3 (1d6) acid damage.

**Entropic Bite.** *Melee Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one object or structure.

**Hit:** The target's hit point maximum is halved. If this reduced the target's hit point maximum to below 10, it is instead destroyed utterly, leaving behind no remains. This reduction ends if a target receives the benefits of a mending spell or is repaired with a successful DC 20 (Artisan's tools) check using appropriate materials.





**Extra Example**







# Ashlynn Kozroth

## SOVEREIGN OF THE GODLESS MONARCHY

*"Accepting the fact that I was dead was hard...  
But knowing when my end is, and that goodbye  
is inevitable? That's harder by far."*

Ashlynn

**M**any clerics are seen as compassionate; willing to help others without question, patient, and virtuous... but not Ashlynn. She has her own way. One nasty comment about someone she loves or cares for, and the gaping wound inflicted by either her or another will stay open till the mistake is rectified with sincerity. Since ascending to the position of the Sovereign, her fiery disposition has remained, though it rears its head less often.

During her early years, Ashlynn heard many stories of adventure, both from her beloved mother and father, and from patrons of the Adventurers Guild which her parents established. Working the front desk, and helping to heal those in need under her father's guidance, allowed her to hear encounters straight from those who lived through them. With such tales surrounding her, she grew enamored with the idea of exploring the world and meeting different beings, wanting the chance to create her own stories of adventure. But for every story of success, there is one of failure, and tales of loyalty and betrayal travel parallel. When it came to friendships and losses, some parties returned fewer and drowned their sorrows, some honored the passing of those they traveled alongside with song, and, on rare occasions, some groups never returned at all. Even after seeing all of those losses paraded in front of her, the allure of adventure was still there, always gnawing deep.

Over time she became close friends with a couple of frequent guild patrons—a protective, fight-hardened dragonborn named Surina, and Orsik, a spell-sliding dwarf. Sharing her desire to adventure, they extended an offer for her to join them and their

friends. An opportunity she readily accepted. Thus began Ashlynn's journey of adventure, always being sure to write down her experiences to share with her parents, as they once did for her. Around campfires she shared the tales she knew, every detail still as vivid as the day she first heard them. Her wonder of the unexplored world was refreshing to her companions, something they enjoyed and reminisced on multiple times when sharing their own past tales. Through their travels, the bond they formed continued to grow, and they often found themselves laughing at the grim humor she brought forth, finding reassurance that she wasn't as naïve to the world as first assumed.

When the allure of adventuring had dwindled, and her companions were prepared to rest their sword arms for a time, the early pages of Ashlynn's small journal held the tales of everything they had experienced—stories of successes and scars alike. Excitement bubbled up the closer to home they came, and when the final stretch was in sight, they spent one final night beneath the stars, enjoying each other's company and camping amongst the trees. Sleep came swiftly for all that night, but when the friends woke the next day, Ashlynn's belongings and a smattering of blood were all that remained. She was nowhere to be found.

Upon opening her eyes, Ashlynn found herself surrounded by golden wheat and with soft ash beneath her head. A swirling grey vortex sky was staring down at her, far-off on the horizon lightning flickered in an expanse that seemed as if it were consumed by shadows, and in the distance sat a grand, wooden log cabin with softly glowing lanterns... It was all unfamiliar. Panic began to set in and only grew when her friends didn't answer her cries, but as moments passed, it began to numb. A soft, tugging sensation of familiarity began emanating from her chest, drawing her deeper into the fields. Each step revealed personal life memories, all playing out as though she was peering in rather than reliving the moments that led up to her final night. An obscured figure stole her away from the quiet camp into the undergrowth, where she roused to hear the figure plea: "Help the Sunless Crossing."

The tugging sensation snapped like a severed cord as the final memory faded, and she found





herself collapsing to her knees, an emotional weight crashing on top of her as she realized what had happened... And she mourned, as she knew that she would never see her loved ones again, share her experiences with her parents and that, against all the danger she had faced, died so close to home.

Not long after, the Ashen Shepherds found Ashlynn and they ushered her to the lodge, allowing her to embark on her journey before taking her to what came to be her new home, Nox Valar. Regardless of whether the person who gave her a swift passage to the afterlife knew or not, she was found to have enough remaining “potential” to take up the mantle of a Godless Monarch. It was assuming the role of Sovereign that ultimately helped her come to terms with her violent passing, especially with Valen by her side, guiding her and playing the role of confidant.

In the end, if this is the hand fate has dealt her, she will play it to its fullest.

## ROLEPLAYING HINTS

Ashlynn is a human with rust-colored hair that is typically tied in a braided bun and wears comfortable, practical clothes of varying shades of black and gray. Her attire provides enough mobility should it be required, with no excessive extravagance. Despite her dull clothing colors, there is a welcoming kindness to her. She isn’t shy to crack a grim joke, or cause a little bit of harmless mischief for fun, but she knows where to stop before going too far. Deep down, she is a “help but take no shit” person.

Having grown into her position as Sovereign, Ashlynn executes her duties efficiently; but that doesn’t mean that she is without moments of fun. Sneaking away from her guards for a casual stroll to explore the town or a run across the rooftops isn’t uncommon, and some teasing and sass when handling lighter work is playful for her, especially when it catches Valen, or other Godless Monarchs, off guard. On more than one occasion, after being rudely cut off or spoken over, she has been known to snap a fan open sharply to silence a discussion, peering out over it till the offending party squirms out an apology—a surefire way to coax a small smirk from her lips.

Due to her role as Sovereign, Ashlynn takes the protection of The Sunless Crossing and its people seriously. With the majority of the threats coming from undead who drag themselves from The Lightless Chasm, their unwelcome presence is dealt with swiftly. Ashlynn’s role as a cleric remains the biggest asset she has during these altercations. She often puts herself in harm’s way to help those who are unable to protect themselves, fighting to buy time for them to escape. In other instances, she charges to people she cares for who require healing, even at the cost of injury herself.



