

13th Age Adventures - The Burrowing Dead

By [Grimmshade](#) - Posted 2013/09/05

The following scenario is meant for 2nd level characters using the [13th Age](#) role-playing game. Reference the [13th Age](#) book to balance encounters by number of players. The scenario itself means to be an open setting with adventure potential, allowing flexible, collaborative, non-linear play. Feel free to change anything to better suit your needs.

Also, treasure has not been incorporated into the scenario.

Basic Plot/Hook

The village of Greenhill is the birthplace of the paladin Gedrick Averness. Averness gained fame fighting the Lich King's forces when the undead first made strikes against the empire in this age. He held off a legion of zombies with his mace Purifier.

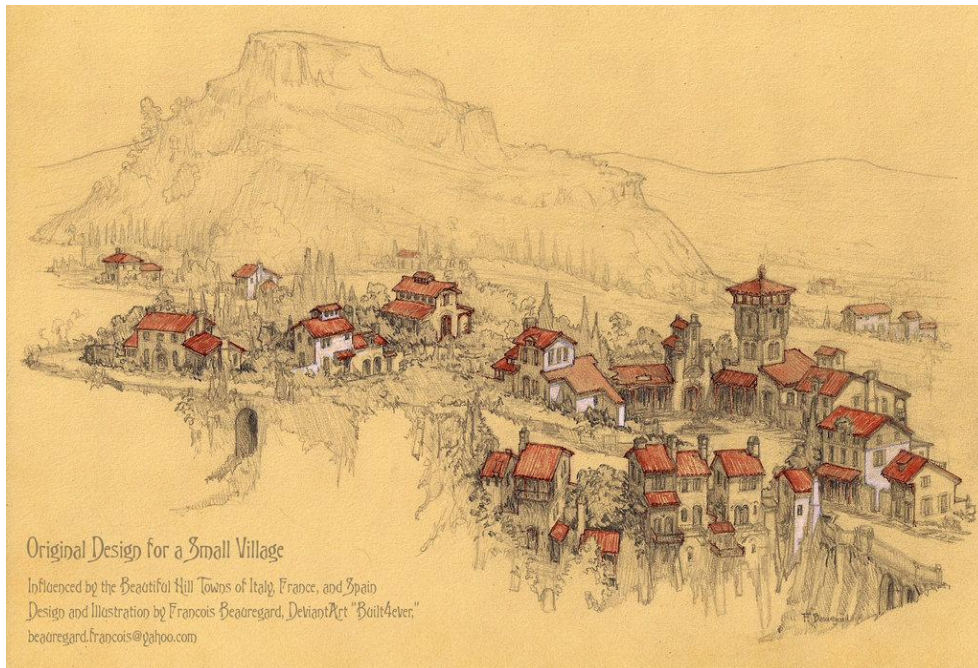
Gedrick Averness fell just before the Emperor's army arrived to finish off the undead horde and save the town. Gedrick had given his life protecting. Gedrick was returned to the village of his birth, where he was placed in a family tomb, and Purifier was displayed in a glass case in the village church.

Of late, the graves in the Greenhill graveyard have begun to be mysteriously emptied. The first sign of this is a grave taking on a sunken appearance. Upon unearthing, the grave is found empty. Recently, and even more disturbing, villagers have disappeared without a trace.

GM Info (What's really happening)

A servant of the Lich King has infected the village of Greenhill with an evil spirit called a Vardoger. The spirit is impersonating the village priest, and opening the wards on the graves, allowing the dead to become burrowing dead. The undead things cannot touch Purifier, due to protection spells cast upon it,

however the Vardoger does plan to raise Gedrick Averness as a Death Knight through a horrid ritual involving the souls of the villagers.



HILLTOP VILLAGE BY FRANCOIS BEAUREGARD - BUILT4EVER
ON DEVIANTART, USED WITHOUT PERMISSION

Icon Involvement

Archmage - *"I don't believe we have documented that magical item yet."*

Dwarf Lord - *"I was not aware of a Dwarven treasure in that village."*

Emperor - "The memorial of a hero of the Empire must not be stained in this way."

Lich King - "The memorial of a dead hero would be an insidious spot for undead corruption within the Empire."

Priestess - "Despite what the Dwarf Lord says, the village is home to a holy relic. We should see that it remains so, as a symbol of hope."

Prince of Shadows - "A relic you say?"

Purifier

The weapon of Gedrick Averness lies in a trapped glass case in the village church.

Case Lock: DC 15

Glass Case Trap: Poison Needle - DC 15 to notice/disarm, +5 vs PD (person opening case) - 2d6 poison damage & 5 ongoing poison damage.

The glass case is also warded against undead. Adventurer Tier undead cannot touch it. Champion Tier undead need to make 3 successful hard saves to touch the case or it's contents.

Purifier - (+1 Mace, *Recharge 11+*)

When you crit an undead with this weapon, you may choose to triple the damage instead of the usual double.

Quirk: Fondness for billowing cloaks or coats, and helmets or hats that dramatically shade the eyes.



KNIGHT'S MACE BY
RAVERUNNER ON
DEVIANART

Investigation

The GM should be fairly generous in making the following investigation rolls broad enough to allow for actions the PCs wish to attempt. Succeed or fail, the investigation should give information to proceed. Dead end investigations are zero fun.

Questioning Locals - DC 15

Success turns up one of the following each roll.

1. The town priest, Harcourt, took in a strange cloaked traveller before this all started.
2. When the cloaked stranger left, he presented Harcourt with a gift of a silver and glass mirror.
3. It's not entirely true that the people vanishing leave no trace. There is always a mound of disturbed earth found near their last location.
4. Screams have been heard at night coming from the direction of the Averness crypt.

Failure results also turn up one of the above items of information, but also give one of the following failure consequences:

1. The questioned local is the next to vanish! The locals become suspicious of the outsiders, and future questioning rolls are DC 20.
 - o A DC 20 pacifying roll of some sort can lower this DC back to 15. Failure on the pacifying roll results in the villagers beginning to congregate in the church for protection, or some other such thing. One more failed roll at this point allows the Vardoger to complete it's ritual and raise the Death Knight.
2. Some locals become suspicious of the questioning and inform priest Harcourt (who is actually the Vardoger). The Vardoger sends burrowing dead to attack the party.
3. Locals take it upon themselves to confront the PCs about the current problems, and why the Emperor/Archmage/Priestess, etc. is not helping. It takes another DC 15 check to gain the locals'

trust, with failure on that roll resulting in the villagers becoming abusive and trying to run the PCs out of town. (The villagers are level 0 Mooks, with a level 1 normal leader)

Looking for Clues - DC (Variable, see below) Use whatever Attribute and Background seems appropriate for the PCs' investigative actions.

The Sunken Graves - DC 15 - Success shows that the grave was not dug down from the top, but that whatever was inside dug away through the earth.
(GM: *These dead became the Burrowing Dead*)

Failure gives the same information, but the investigator loses a Recovery due to a rot worm infestation. The infestation requires an immediate DC 15 heal check of some sort. If there is no access to this type of check, or the result is a failure, the victim must make Last Gasp Saves (p.200) or die.

The Sites of Missing Villagers - DC 15 - Success shows that here is a mound of loose earth near where the villager vanished. Digging into this loose earth reveals bits of clothing from the victims.

Failure gives the above info and also the same rot worm result as in "The Sunken Graves."

A DC 20 tracking roll of some sort allows the Burrowing Dead to be tracked back to the tomb of Averness. Failure on this tracking roll results in an ambush by Burrowing Dead.

The Church - DC 20 - Success turns up signs of grave dirt around the case containing Purifier (GM: *this is from attempts by undead to take the weapon.*) Success also reveals a broken glass and silver mirror in priest Harcourt's chamber. (GM: *The Vardoger was freed when Harcourt looked into the mirror. The real Harcourt was taken to the Averness crypt. The shapechanging Vardoger has replaced him.*)

Failure means they gain the same information, but the Vardoger either attacks in ambush with a large number of Burrowing Dead, or retreats to the Averness crypt to speed along the ritual to raise the Death Knight.



GRAVEYARD BY AMYLOVEGUTS ON DEVIANTART

The Tomb of Averness - The tomb door is sealed (DC 20), and the entrance is trapped (Falling Spikes - DC 20 Notice/Disarm/Avoid - +10 vs AC (creature failing to avoid) - 3d6 damage (resets after use))

Failure on the roll to open the door still results in success, but the unlocking takes time and the party is ambushed by Burrowing Dead, or the ritual inside is finished and the Death Knight awakens.

Inside the tomb is the open casket holding the paladin Gedrick Averness. Surrounding the paladin's casket are the missing villagers, turned into large larvae-type worms with human heads. These larvae have umbilical-like cords attached to the paladin's corpse, feeding it unnatural essence. When dramatically appropriate (probably due to too many failed investigation checks) this influx results in Averness rising as a Death Knight.

If PCs make it inside the tomb with almost no failed investigation rolls, the ritual will still be far from complete. The Vardoger and the Burrowing Dead will probably meet the PCs here for a showdown.

If the PCs make it inside the tomb with a few failed investigation rolls, the ritual will be nearly complete. The Vardoger and the Burrowing Dead will fight the PCs while the ritual finishes. The Larvae have a total of 50 HP (combined, as mooks), and the PCs may use the Coup De Grace rules (p.172) to attack them. If they are dealt 50 HP before the escalation die reaches +3, the ritual is ended. If the escalation die reaches +3, the Death Knight rises.

If the PCs fail many investigation checks, or simply don't investigate very hard, the Death Knight emerges and attacks the village with the Vardoger and Burrowing Dead. He stops to pick up Purifier on the way.



AT THE GRAVEYARD BY DRAZEBOT ON
DEVIANTART

PC Ritual Options

PC ritual casters could potentially use a ritual to make the Vardoger corporeal for a combat, removing its "Ghostly" ability.

They could also potentially perform a counter-ritual to the Death Knight ritual, which would probably draw an attack from the Vardoger and Burrowing Dead.

These are of course only a couple of ideas for the many uses of PC rituals in this scenario.

Vardoger

The Vardoger is a shape-changing spirit who impersonates others.

4th level caster [UNDEAD]

Initiative +9

Vulnerability: holy

Deathly Touch +9 vs. PD - 10 Damage

Natural 16+: The Vardoger can pop free from the target.

R: Doppelganger +9 vs. MD (one nearby or far away enemy) - 15 psychic damage and the target is confused (save ends).

C: Bait and Switch +9 vs. MD (1 nearby enemy) - Vardoger pops free of the target if engaged, and target makes an at-will melee attack vs the nearest other enemy.

Limited Use: 1/battle as a quick action.

Ghostly: This creature has resist damage 16+ to all damage (even holy) except force damage. It can move through solid objects, but cannot end its move inside them.

AC 18 PD 13 MD 16 HP 50

Burrowing Dead

Like zombies, that burrow through the earth and pull their victims under.

2nd level blocker [UNDEAD]

Initiative +1

Vulnerability: holy

Grave Grab +7 vs. AC - 7 damage

Natural even hit: Target is also grabbed (p.172). If target is still grabbed at the start of Burrowing Dead's next turn, the Burrowing Dead makes a burrow check (p.200), and if successful pulls the victim under where the victim must begin making Last Gasp Saves (p.200) or suffocate. The Burrowing Dead may not take an action while suffocating a victim, and is underground.

Headshot: A critical hit against a Burrowing Dead drops it to 0 hp.

Burrow: see p.200

AC 15 PD 13 MD 9 HP 50

Death Knight (Averness)

The undead paladin Gedrick Averness.

Level 5 wrecker [UNDEAD]

Initiative +8

Vulnerability: holy

Life Draining Weapon +10 vs AC (2 attacks) - 5 damage, and 4 ongoing negative energy damage.

Natural even hit: Death Knight can make a Shield Bash attack as a free action.

[special trigger] Shield Bash +11 vs PD - 5 damage and target pops free.

Nastier Special

If the Death Knight gains Purifier, it gets +1 to Life Draining Weapon attacks and damage, and crits do triple damage vs the living.

AC 21 PD 19 MD 15 HP 70