

Shadows of Mirahan

Contents

| | |
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| Preface | |
| Introduction | |
| Background | |
| Chapter 1: The Siege of Cascada Pass | |
| Chapter 2: Into the Eternal Forest | |
| Chapter 3: Rise of the Death Dealer | |
| Appendix I: Adventuring | |
| Appendix II: Advanced Rules | |
| Appendix III: New Monsters | |
| Appendix IV: Experience Tracker | |
| Appendix V: Pre-generated Characters | |
| Appendix VI: The Death Dealer | |

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| 91 | |

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Shadows of Mirahan

Preface...

Fantasy role-playing games are born of shared legends. Ages past, when storytellers sat around fires watching sparks rise into the blue-dark sky, their tales of heroism and imagination were not so different from ones played out around gaming tables today. Tales were told of sacrifice, of good persevering over darkness, and of love.

Their heroes — *our* heroes — spring instantly to mind. *Beowulf*. *Arthur*. *Merlin*. Acceptance into this august canon occurs only once in a great while. Howard's Conan and Moorcock's Elric, Leiber's Fafhrd and Mouser — a mere few rise above the throng of forgettable heroes passing through our collective consciousness. Even fewer do it without words.

Enter the Death Dealer.

The faceless rider, leaving naught but destruction in his wake, Death personified. That a handful of paintings could rise from the ranks of fantasy art and stake a brutal place among our culture's icons speaks to the timeless power of the images and the genius of their creator.

That the dark rider's tale has been told many times is no wonder. The paintings speak of a violent world at once familiar and alien, leaving every wide-eyed 12-year old to imagine the hue and cry of great armies. The legend of the Death Dealer is greater than these stories, perhaps greater than this story. Just as the myth of King Arthur is far more than the sum of his legends, so too does the Death Dealer defy a single definitive tale.

Ages past, we would have stirred the fire and told you how the Death Dealer's eyes flared like smoldering embers. Today, we can bring him to your game, so that his legend lives on in the way that only role-players understand.

Introduction

Shadows of Mirahan is designed for 5 characters of 7th through 9th level, and is based on the comic series of the same name. While it is not necessary to read the comics to enjoy the adventure, having a sense of the land of Iparsia and its inhabitants can aid game play. Similarly, while those who have read the comics will know the major villains, the adventure provides enough surprises to keep even experienced readers on their toes.

A good mix of character roles is essential to survival and success. Able fighters and paladins will be called on to serve with blade and spear, the nature skills of the druid and ranger will serve the party in good stead in the wilds of the Cascada Peaks, and the complimentary talent of the warlord and rogue will prove crucial in key encounters. Though humans feature exclusively in the series, non-human races can be easily introduced to the world. See **Appendix I: Adventuring in The Lands of Iparsia**, for options and details for tailoring the game to your setting.

The adventure takes place primarily in mountainous borderlands of two great kingdoms, Oro and Edani, and both are easily converted to most fantasy worlds. Key features include a high mountain range separating a fetid swamp and ancient woodland.

Adventure Summary

The adventure begins with the heroes responding to reports of unrest on the borderlands of the Kingdom of Oro. Tales hold that Edani's civil unrest now threatens to spill over the border into Oro. Riding over Cascada Pass, the heroes discover a far greater threat than any mundane war: a demonic horde of unspeakable beings composed of worms, maggots, and blood meal.



Shadows of Mirahan

Background

Nine hundred years ago, the land of Iparsia was ravaged by war between the kingdoms of Oro and Edani. As battles raged out of control, a black rider appeared, laying waste to both sides of the conflict, killing the greatest warriors as easily as the untrained combatants. This unconquerable rider was known as the Death Dealer. The kings of Oro and Edani recognized that if they did not end this war, the black rider would destroy them all. A treaty was signed in blood, and the Death Dealer disappeared into the primeval forest. Legend holds that as long as Oro and Edani are at peace, the dark rider will sleep.

Nearly a millennium later, an ancient evil awakens to threaten the lands of Iparsia. The god-seed of Mirahan, World Swallower, the Oblivion God, threatens to eliminate both life and death. Called from its ancient sleep by the atrocities of the Edanian civil war, Mirahan exists only to bring about an end to existence. Feeding off of fear and terror, Mirahan's unholy god-seed animates the corpses of those that die in battle, which in turn sow fear and more destruction throughout Edani. The army of animated corpses, better known as the Shadow Horde, threaten to bring an end to the folk of Iparsia ... and indeed, all the world.

In order to fight back the Shadows of Mirahan, the heroes must make a choice: risk absolute destruction, or embrace death in the defense of life.

The Death Dealer...

The Death Dealer himself does not actually take part in this adventure. With nearly godlike power, his presence would serve only to detract from the heroism of the players. The final encounter includes fell magicks designed to subjugate the Death Dealer, and the players' success allows the Death Dealer to return to his unfettered status.

Some players may be disappointed that they cannot take the role of the Death Dealer himself. While appealing in theory, the actual experience of playing a unique, nigh-invulnerable engine of destruction quickly resolves to a meaningless series of die rolls. Alone, the Death Dealer can destroy anything that crosses its path, except for the god Mirahan, the very reason for the Death Dealer's existence.

And yet, the same forces that gave rise to the Death Dealer also course in the hearts of the people of Iparsia. See **Appendix II: Advanced Rules** for rules variants that bring the brutal reality of the Death Dealer to life at your table.

And finally, for those devout DMs who simply must put the Death Dealer into play, we have included stats at the end of this book. Key to running the dark rider is remembering that it is the PCs, not the Death Dealer, who should be the focus of the adventure. The dark rider is like unto a force of nature, and if used too often, quickly overshadows the players' characters, lessening the enjoyment for all. Use the Death Dealer as you might an ancient dragon or demon lord: sparingly, and for specific effect. When brought in to rescue the heroes from mortal danger (or their own foolishness) the Death Dealer goes from a creature of myth to a mere puppet of the DM's will. Even if Iparsia hangs in the balance, the heroes must succeed or fail on their own merits, not those of the dark rider.



Shadows of Mirahan



Chapter 1: The Siege of Cascada Pass

The adventure begins with the heroes patrolling the wild borderlands between Oro and Edani. Investigating reports of the Edani civil war, the heroes ride high into the Cascada Mountains, where they discover the grim truth of the encroaching darkness: A tide of Edani refugees are fleeing up the pass closely pursued by a horde of zombies.

It is up to the heroes to hold off the advancing army long enough for the refugees to reach the safety of the forest below. This challenge is nigh-impossible—the Shadow Horde numbers in the thousands. But allowing the refugees to be slaughtered at the hands of the zombies is a wicked act with terrible repercussions: If the heroes do not take a stand, the Shadow Horde will easily sweep over the pass and into Oro.

In order to save the refugees, the PCs must take a heroic stand against an undead, demonic army. The sole defensible choke point is the ruined keep that once warded over the pass. Though the heroes have no chance at defeating the entire army, there is a small chance that they can slow the Shadow Horde long enough for the refugees

to flee. If the heroes can accomplish even this small task, they will have won a victory against the dark god Mirahan.

DM's Note: The heroes cannot “win” this encounter in the traditional sense; at some point in the adventure (and indeed, at many points), the heroes will be forced to retreat. Those that refuse to run will be slaughtered before the unstoppable might of the Shadow Horde. While the courageous have a chance of holding off the army long enough for the refugees to flee to safety, and the cunning can certainly evade the army, accomplishing both goals is a task suited only for true heroes.

To save the refugees, the PCs must hold the ruined keep for 30 rounds. However, even once the refugees are clear of the horde, the heroes' survival is far from ensured. In order to escape with their lives, the heroes must discover a means to elude the horde and slip out of the stronghold.

The Siege

The assault of the Shadow Horde is a dynamic encounter that takes place over several encounter areas. The heroes' actions — or inaction — have an immediate and direct effect on the encounter, and on which foes the heroes must face.

Each encounter provides specific foes based upon the progress of the siege. Success on the part of the PCs hinges on the heroes' ability to

