

# RQ1: NIGHT OF THE WALKING DEAD: GAME MASTER'S HANDBOOK

## HOW TO USE THIS

This handbook is a supplement for running the 2e Ravenloft module, *Night of the Walking Dead*. It's meant to:

- Make it easier to run
- De-railroad it

You should read the module in its entirety first, once. After that, this handbook should make sense.

## STUFF TO PRINT

You'll need to print all this out beforehand.

### THIS PDF

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This document will guide you through the module. You shouldn't need to keep a copy of the module itself around.

### THE MAPS

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This includes:

- The town map from the module
- The annotated cemetery map (the last page here)

Players can annotate the town map as they discover it. You'll run Part 3 of the module from your annotated cemetery map. I hope you can read my scribbling.

### PART 2 OF THE MODULE

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This contains the key to the village. Rather than reproduce it here for no reason, it's easier to print off just this section in booklet form and consult as needed.

### THE APPENDICES OF THE MODULE

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The appendices include statblocks and the text of the scroll.

# RQ1: NIGHT OF THE WALKING DEAD

## PART 1: THE SWAMP

PCs start on a swamp-raft. The mists of Ravenloft trap them.

**Background:** the bad stuff happened **3 weeks ago**.

- Marais d'Tarascon (ma RAY de ta RAS kon) is a village on the SE edge of a swamp. It's in Ravenloft, on the island of Souragne (soo RAW nya).
- Pierre Tarascon founded it and the plantation here
- Pierre had 3 sons:
  - Jean (all business)
  - Marcon (twin of Jean, more books than biz)
  - Luc (the youngest by 15 years, no biz xp)
- Marcel found Pierre's journal
  - It mentioned the Hyskosa Scroll
  - Marcel believed it contained secrets to power
  - He sought it obsessively
- Luc got fortune told by Vistani named Valana
  - Her verse led him to passage in cemetery
  - He took Marcel there
  - They found the Hyskosa scroll
  - But Marcel got killed by zombies
  - And Luc's mind went bye-bye
- Jean rescued Luc but things turned out badly
  - Jean took Marcel's body to priest for rez
  - But rez failed, Marcel zombie lord instead
  - Jean hid the scroll
  - Jean kept zombie lord Marcel in cemetery
  - Luc only recites snippets from the scroll; so Jean sent him to live in the swamp alone
- Jean wanted to protect bros but has been driven mad
  - Maintaining the status quo, which is:
  - Stalling Marcel from taking over the island, by saying he's searching for the scroll on Marcel's behalf, when really he's doing no such thing
  - But Marcel meanwhile is zombifying locals
  - And Jean is gone crazy, murdering for Marcel

**Railroad.** The OG module is a railroad. We'll lean into that and treat the encounters at the start as a cutscene. Flava text:

Night begins to settle over the swamp, cloaking the dense undergrowth in darkness and turning the water's surface to black. With it comes a clinging, creeping fog, rising from the water like a spectral steam. The fog surrounds you, its dampness caressing you like cold, dead hands. The swamp seems to retreat from the mists, its sights and sounds disappearing into some unseen distance. All that remains visible is the cold, choking fog. Even your companions seem far away. For a moment, everything is quiet. What few sounds you can hear are amplified by the surrounding mists: your own breathing, your beating heart. Then the fog begins to dissipate, fading away as quickly as it appeared, leaving you and your companions alone in the dismal swamp.

At this point, take a moment to briefly pan across the PCs. Make sure everyone knows who the other PCs are.

By flashback or by present action establish: **how did you get here?** Immediately cut to the sky:

The swamp seems even darker than it did before. The nearby trees have become twisted shadows with clawlike branches reaching out, and a foul odor rises from the murky water. Overhead, through the tangled branches, the sky also appears strange. The stars have subtly changed positions, and the moon is closer, nearly full. Menacing clouds begin to roll across the western sky like a curtain of black smoke. In but a few moments, the clouds blot out the feeble starlight completely. A storm is brewing—a very bad storm.

You're about to get the first "encounter," with a crocodile. Since this is railroad, we won't have the chance of failure; we'll use it to establish more about the characters instead.

The day is dark and dismal, painted gray by the mist and clouds. The sun has not shown its face since you arrived, and the air is clammy and cold. The water below the raft is several feet deep. To one side, black logs drift lazily atop the stagnant water. To the other, shadows slip through the trees and the underbrush, moving in time with the raft. The eyes of the swamp are upon you.

A crocodile grabs a PC by the arm. Establish:

- Who saves the PC?
- What is the bond between these PCs, or is this the start of a new bond?

The raft slips through a tangle of tall reeds growing up from beneath the black, murky water. The fog has dissipated, but the surroundings are still gloomy. Overhead, branches entwine to form a dense canopy. The sounds of the swamp are louder now, and they echo through the trees. Unseen creatures slide through the reeds below the water's surface. A chorus of croaks and ribbits begins, as if to greet you, growing so loud that every other sound is drowned out by their raucous song. Then, all at once, the chorus stops.

Call for DC 15 Perception checks. All who succeed see 3 giant frogs about to attack. Ask the player with the highest roll to establish how they defeat the frogs. Tell them they also find a boat nearly hidden in the reeds. The player with the highest Perception check notices a chest in the boat. In the chest are waterlogged food, clothes, and two *+1 short swords* wrapped in soaking wet cloth.

A little island of dry land rises out of the stagnant water. The light comes from a fire that forms the center of a small camp. In the flickering light, you can clearly see a colorful Vistani wagon, two old mares, three gaily-clad children, and an old woman. A moment later, two men step into view. One is old and thin, the other young and strong. They settle themselves beside the fire. Then the old man looks up, directing the gaze of his good eye upon you. The other eye is milky and blank. The man smiles and motions with his withered hand, inviting you to join his group.

Things to note:

- This is the same group that Luc visited 3 weeks ago
- They are getting out of Dodge
- 7 Vistani here, 3 of them kids
  - **Old Scarengi**, one milky eye
  - his wife, **Ryana**, plump and jolly
  - son **Carlioni**, strong, mustache
- They meet everyone but **Valana**; don't mention her
- They act concerned, advise not going to town
- Scarengi invites friendly parties to enjoy dinner and to share the fire until morning
- Good times, kids playing
- After dinner, "Ah, time for a fortune": flava text~

The door at the back of the wagon opens to reveal a shapely young woman with dark, expressive eyes. She smiles shyly, then settles nearby, beside the fire. "This," Scarengi proclaims proudly, "is my beautiful daughter Valana. She will tell your fortune."

Valana gazes at each of you in turn, with the firelight shining in her large, black eyes. "The trouble began when I cast the runes for that quiet and lost young man," she explains sadly. "Perhaps it will end with another casting." She holds a flat pan in her lap and stone tiles in her hands. Then, after gazing once again into your eyes, she drops the tiles into the pan. "The lost one has called you!" Valana gasps.

Each member of her family hastily makes a protective gesture. "The dead will walk with the coming storm, and you must find a way to put them to rest. If you cannot, the rain will turn to blood! It will drown you—you and all of Marais d'Tarascon."

Scarengi quickly ushers his wife and daughter into the wagon. "No charge for your fortune," the old man adds hastily. "It is time to rest after the adventures of the day. Be our guests and sleep beside the fire."

Before Valana takes her leave, she speaks in a clearly audible whisper: **Beware the madman; beware his blood.** The PCs fall asleep regardless after this, maaaagic. When they wake up, the Vistani are gone.

The trees in this part of the swamp close in around the raft, forming a thick tangle of branches and exposed roots, making progress slow and difficult. Sharp, broken limbs scratch your arms and legs as you push the raft forward, and the wind whistles an odd, lifeless tune as it rushes through the leaves overhead. As you break through a clump of foliage, a light appears in the distance. It is brighter than a single lantern, warm and inviting in the cold damp air. The light is not at eye level. It hovers in the dark so that you must look up to see it.

Like moths to a flame, you and your raft slide easily toward the source of the light. It is a small wooden house, hardly larger than a shack. Light spills from its two front windows and a wide open door. The house appears to be suspended in the air above the surface of the swamp, its reflection shimmering in the dank pool before it.

Suddenly, a rope ladder drops from the doorway. No figure steps into the light to greet you, and not even a shadow passes the open door. The ladder, constructed of wooden steps and thick rope, simply rolls out with a brief clatter of knocking wood. The last step hangs just above the surface of the fetid water, inviting you to climb up into the warm light.

The little house has only one room. All told, more than two dozen lanterns hang from pegs on the wall and sit on the warped wooden floor, flooding the shack with light. To the right of the door, unopened boxes have been neatly stacked against the wall. An open-topped barrel sits beside the boxes.

In the center of the room, facing the door, is a young man. He sits within a circle of five burning lanterns, with his large, blank eyes fixed in place. The young man is unusually thin and pale, and his long, blond hair hangs limply to his shoulders. His features are tortured. The simple shirt and pants that he wears are clean and fresh. He clutches a small book in his lap, but makes no move to get up or greet you—except to slowly struggle out an incomprehensible phrase: "The on descend shall evil of night the land, at near is signs of hexad this when hand." Then he returns to his quiet state, neither speaking nor responding in any way.

This is Luc. He only speaks twisted verses from the Hyskos Scroll. He always has a **lit lantern** and freaks if it's quenched. The place has fresh food and drink brought by the priest. **The book on his lap** is children's poetry. He gives it without struggle. Inscription inside: **To Luc, my beloved brother. – Marcel.**

## PART 2: MARAIS D'TARASCON

- They can follow smoke to town next day.
- Luc will follow the party; only violence prevents.
- If they wait more than 2 days, **Shaman Brucian** arrives with fresh supplies for Luc. He can lead to village.

As you enter the village, lighting strikes, but no rain falls. The storm simply hangs. When it finally breaks, it promises to be spectacular.

For this section, print out Part2 of the module for reference. Each day will be divided into **6 turns**:

1. Dawn
2. Morning
3. Noon
4. Afternoon
5. Evening.
6. Night

**Start at dawn on day 1.** For each turn:

- Ask the players to place their marker on a building.
- **If the area is keyed**, resolve the encounter by reference to the village booklet, starting with the lowest keyed number.
- **If the area is not keyed**, say the character wanders around until he finds something of interest, and put the marker on the nearest unknown area, then resolve.

Run Day 1 Dawn in this way and any other turns that are not keyed to **Events**. Events replace normal turns for at least one group of PCs. The events follow. **The Dinner Party** is optional and happens if the party enters the planation at night. It's listed last.

### DAY 1 MORNING: THE FUNERAL

A funeral processsion. The whole town congregating.

Solemn faces gaze at you suspiciously, but no one says a word. The villagers soon return their attention to the priest who stands over a coffin wrapped in heavy chains..

The priest's booming voice echoes throughout the churchyard. "Friends and family, we mourn the untimely death of Jeremiah d'Gris," he laments. "Let us take comfort in the fact that he goes to a better place, and let us pray that his eternal rest is peaceful and without incident. Jeremiah, you will be missed, but you will not be welcome here again. Depart this plane and go to the next world with our blessing."

The priest continues his liturgy, even though a muffled bang causes him a moment's pause. The villagers flinch but quickly regain their composure. The bang sounds again from within the coffin. The coffin rocks back and forth, but the priest and the crowd ignore it.

Pierot the gravetender opens the cemetery gate. Pallbearers slide the coffin inside an open vault and quickly seal it. All wordlessly depart.

**If the PCs try to interfere**, the priest protests, but no one stops them. Crowd and constable will flee. Priest will watch.

**If the coffin opens**, the zombie inside attacks, then tries to flee to the fields east of the village.

**If the party follows a fleeing undead henceforth**, they can easily track to the fields beyond the planation.

- Tracking the undead here requires DC 25 check.
- Quarry returns to 11B, entering secret passage.

### DAY 2 MORNING: SCENE OF THE CRIME

The party finds the constable kneeling in an alley:

The constable regards you sternly. Spattered all around him on the ground and walls are flecks of reddish brown. Before him is a large stain of the same substance, apparently dried blood. In the center of the stain is a single piece of bright red licorice.

Jean did it but no one knows. Constable accepts help.

### DAY 2 NIGHT: THE ODOR OF DEATH

A vile stench wafts, DC 14 Con save.

- **Success**: can move and investigate source.
- **Failure**: suffer effects instead (see Marcel's statblock).
- Someone in sight of the PCs fails a save for sure.
- **If the PCs rush into the streets**, they find flesh and ichor on the dirt path behind in the inn.
- **If the PCs check on Duncan d'Lute** in his room at the inn, he's a zombie now. He's gone come morning.

### DAY 3 AFTERNOON: MADMAN STRIKES

You chilling, but then:

A scream shatters the quiet afternoon, echoing throughout the village streets.

Secretly make a Perception check vs DC 15 for each PC.

- Don't tell the players who succeeded and who failed.
- **Tell the winners**: comes from the bakery (area 2)
- **Tell the losers**: comes from the Constable's place (area 5)

The winners will surprise Jean, hooded and cloaked (and thus unidentifiable):

- He's just stabbed **Lillin**, the innkeeper's daughter.
- He's not finished her yet.
- He drops her and flees
  - DC 20 Athletics to keep up
  - If no one succeeds, he disappears, leaving a piece of licorice for each PC
  - If someone succeeds, can do whatever, but Jean will try to flee again next round
- Jean's stats are in the appendices

If no winners, the losers hear another scream, from the bakery, and find **Lillin** dead and a piece of licorice per PC.

## DAY 4 DAWN: FACING THE MADMAN

Jean attacks the group with Luc in it, most vulnerable first.

The madman stands before you, completely enshrouded by a black, hooded cloak. Only the curved dagger in his pale right hand is visible. Then he tosses back the hood, revealing a face twisted by madness and eyes lit by the fire of insanity. That fire is clearly consuming him, burning away what is left of his mind and his humanity.

"You should not have come to Marais d'Tarascon," the madman hisses. "And you should not have brought that whelp of a brother with you!" he shouts, waving his dagger at Luc. "You have forced this confrontation! Let the blood be on your hands as you taste the blade of Jean Tarascon!"

With that, the madman attacks.

## OPTIONAL: DINNER PARTY

Luc won't come to the plantation. Light only comes from windows at the back. Someone looks in:

Beyond the window lies a spacious dining room with fine appointments, showing taste and wealth. A chandelier of burning candles fills the room with a warm and pleasant light. A number of large, covered serving trays lie upon the table in the center of the room, and places have been set for four.

Three servants enter from a side passage, their heads bowed deeply as they walk. One of the servants goes to the table. With a flourish, he lifts the lid from the grandest platter, revealing tonight's meal: the remains of a freshly dead young man. Dried blood covers much of his pale flesh, and a wicked cut stretches from ear to ear. Suddenly, a face appears in the window, staring with malevolent eyes—the eyes of a ghoul!

PCs must make a DC 13 Wisdom (Horror) save. On a failure, PC flees. The 3 servant-ghouls attack remaining PCs. The house reveals ruin, nothing valuable, some dead villagers.

Ghouls (3): AC 14; Speed 30; HD 2; hp 9; +4 claw/claw/bite 1d3/1d3/1d6 + DC 12 Con save or paralyzed.

## DAY 5 NIGHT: PART 3: LAIR OF THE ZOMBIE LORD

It's the Night of the Walking Dead. Right before the storm breaks, Luc (or his ghost) recites a new verse:

**Look for the scroll where the old rest fine, behind the stone where six stars shine. The finding, however, will cause much pain, beware the time of the falling rain.**

With the coming of night, thunder shakes the village. It starts as a low rumble in the distance and builds to a terrible, long-lasting explosion that rocks cottages and knocks items from shelves. Lightning dances wildly across the sky, casting stark shadows in its skittering flash. Then the rain begins, falling in large, foul drops that soon become a deluge. The streets quickly turn to mud; small streams form in the cracks and depressions. Vision is obscured by the unending sheets of dark water, and the rain falls with such force that it hurts those who venture into its fury. Through it all, the thunder continues to roll above the village, and the lightning intensifies. The storm has arrived.

Ask the players if they have any reason **not** to be in the inn. Presuming they are:

- Many townsfolk gathered around the fire.
- Luc begins reciting fully from the scroll.
- Priest Burcian pulls PCs aside, tells them his role in the entire affair (but he doesn't know Marcel is zombie lord).
- Then another villager drops dead.
- Rises as zombie 1d4 rounds later.
- It tries to capture Luc or whoever is holding the scroll or the copied words of it.
- Make horror checks if none passed yet.
- Luc stops reciting the scroll and instead repeats the verse from the previous column until the party hits area 11B. -

## ZOMBIES ON THE MOVE

Things getting real now.

- Door to inn bursts open.
- Soaked villager says **The walking dead are coming!**

You make your way through the pounding, slimy rain like blind men. You can barely see a foot in front of you unless lightning flashes, briefly illuminating the area. Even then, the houses and trees are nothing more than vague shapes obscured by a shimmering curtain of rain. Walking is difficult, for the dirt paths have become muddy and slick. Finally, you reach the eastern path. The fields beyond remain hidden by darkness and the storm. Peels of thunder and the driving rain muffle nearly every sound.

Then, in a spectacular crack of lightning, the figures come into view—dark forms moving slowly toward the village. They look like misshapen humans, but it's hard to tell. A flash of lightning illuminates the entire field. The dark shapes are everywhere! The closest are but 50 feet away, shambling forward. Darkness returns. It seems as if an eternity passes, or maybe just a heartbeat, and then a brilliant flash lights the sky. Now you can see the figures clearly, if only for a second. They are zombies, a literal army of them, and they are marching on Marais d'Tarascon!

**25 zombies marching on the city.** Horror checks. Marcel has taken things into his own hands, wants that scroll.

**If the PCs head to the cemetery right away,** no prob.

**If the PCs do something else first,** there's a procedure for moving through town:

- Have the party note their path on the map
- Per 60', roll d6:
  - 1-2: d4 zombies surprise PCs
  - 3-4: PCs surprise d4 zombies, may evade
  - 5-6: no encounter

## LAIR OF THE ZOMBIE MASTER

Can enter old cemetery (area 11) via 11B > 11A, breaking through the gate, or climbing the wall. Check the annotated map for almost all necessary.

When they approach area 9:

Stained-glass windows are located high upon the wall at the front of the tomb, spilling a sickly yellow light onto the cracked stone steps below. The stairs lead to a pair of stone doors.

When they ascend the stairs:

The rain suddenly stops. As the doors creak open, the yellow light from within bathes you in its pale glow. A vile, fetid air flows out the doorway in a gust. The huge chamber before you is littered with a carpet of bones and halfeaten carrion. The ceiling is a glass dome, through which you can see the storm clouds parting to unleash a stream of moonlight.

A platform of bones lies in the middle of the chamber, flanked by two flaming braziers that are fashioned from stacked skulls. Atop the platform is a finely crafted throne. Seated there is a hideous creature who resembles Jean Tarascon, but with rotting, pale gray skin. "Welcome to my domain," intones the figure with a cold, rasping voice. "I am Marcel Tarascon, lord of the undead. Give me what I seek. Give me the scroll of the six signs . . . or join the rest of Marais d'Tarascon in living death!" With that, large shapes shamble out of the dark recesses that line the chamber walls. As they step into the light cast by the foul braziers, you see that they are zombies—and they are moving toward you!

Everyone, DC 14 Con save vs Marcel's stench.

- Marcel fights
- 3 zombies and a ju-ju zombie move to protect and fight
- On round 6 or right before Marcel croaks, **the eclipse**

## THE ECLIPSE

In the midst of the battle, a great thunder shakes the chamber. Then lightning strikes the dome overhead and the glass explodes, showering the chamber with glittering shards. The full moon above fills the room with a pale red light. Immediately, Luc begins to drone repeatedly, "The light of the sky, shining over the dead, shall gutter and fail, turning all to red. . . ." The zombie lord shrieks and looks into the sky. The moon is indeed red, and it is slowly disappearing—shrinking as though some unseen monster were swallowing it bite by bite.

The eclipse is one of the six signs of Hyskosa's vision. Throughout the rounds which follow, Luc continues to recite the verse over and over, and the moon continues to shrink until it disappears completely from the clear night sky. (After a time, the moon will slowly return, as the unseen monster is releasing it from its mouth bit by bit.)

- Marcel and his zombies pause for d4 rounds. Then Marcel screams in rage and resumes attacks.

## THE SUN RETURNS

With the coming of dawn, Marais d'Tarascon tries to return to normal. There are many dead, but the zombie army lost its drive before the entire village could be destroyed. If Luc is alive, he comes out of his trancelike state. If he is dead, the destruction of Marcel puts Luc's spirit to rest.

The PCs are given supplies and equipment to replace what they have lost. The villagers thank them for their help, but do not ask them if they want to stay. The PCs are a reminder of dark times, and the villagers simply want to put this period behind them.

With the warmth of the welcome sun shining down upon them, the party leaves the village. What happens to them next is largely up to you. They can either return to the world from which they were plucked, or journey to another island domain in the foul sea of mists. Whatever lies ahead, the Mists rise up somewhere upon the road. When the tendrils of fog fade away, who knows what adventure awaits?

# THE ZOMBIE LORD'S LAIR (Marais d'Tarascon Cemetery)

One square = 10 feet  
Wall = 10 feet high

Passing zombie room w/o entry  
causes zombies to follow.

Zombie: AC 8 MU 20' HD 2  
hp 14 +4 d8

Bats: AC 13 MU 10' fly 60'  
hp 4 +3 d2 +3 AC in flight,  
poor morale

Skeleton: AC 14, MU 40' hp 5  
+4 d6, resist non-edged

Bats: AC 14 MU 20/40  
hp 4 +2 d3 +50 disease

\*5 Any PC entering: roll die: on 5-6, bumps into submerged  
skeleton. It stands, grins, face 2 face w/ PC. Horror check,  
PC 13. Failure: drop held items and run. 50% dropped items  
sunk and lost forever.

normal entrance here  
25 heavy to break  
chaos, alerts  
Marcel

Crypt

appear to  
move in  
lightning  
Gargoyle flash

Mausoleum

AC 15 MU 30 HD 3+  
hp 22, +7 d4  
hurl's speed, immune  
to zombie non-magic, resist  
non-slashing and true, immune  
to undead slt, ready, immune  
to undead slt, ready, immune  
to undead slt, ready, immune

Statue with Secret Passage

Secret entrance here

