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# Journeys Beyond:

## Proto-Dimensions for Dark Conspiracy<sup>™</sup>

By William Spencer-Hale © 1995 ❖ Illustrated by Lorelle Ahlstrom © 1995



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### Journey to Torment

The trek had been long and arduous but, despite all the setbacks, they had finally arrived. Their destination, to the casual observer, would have seemed like a harmless one, although there were a few who knew of the true intent of their journey. Those that did attempted to thwart their plans with all the resources at their command.

They had failed.

On the peaceful windswept Salisbury plain, Stonehenge spread before them, its ancient architecture and silent shadows

betraying nothing of its builders. It was a monument to secrets, erected in a time long forgotten, shrouded in the mists of history. It was the curse of men to forget.

And yet, those who now stood before its ancient pillars knew these secrets. They had spent years in researching the origins and purposes of the great monoliths and in so doing had discovered a frightening truth. The stone monuments were not created for summoning horrid entities from the dark depths outside of man's influence, nor were they burial mounds or arenas of religious sacrifice. They were not temples to gods long forgotten. These stone memorials were gates, locked and guarded from this side to prevent entrance into our world from things not quite human and not of this earth. They were doors to a dimensional prison, protecting mankind

from the horrors that lurk just a heartbeat away on the other side.

Now, the guards are gone, swallowed in time, their purpose forgotten to all except a diligent few who possess the need to unearth such secrets. The doorways lay waiting for any who would enter or for any who would give invitation to those on the other side.

Those who stood before the doorway had come to invade, not to invite.

Stonehenge was quiet. A gentle rain fell upon the soft grass and, off in the distance, a small herd of sheep grazed peacefully. A wind howled across the plain and added an eerie soundtrack to the task of the travelers. The last symphony they would hear on this world for awhile, possibly ever.

They set to their task in earnest. The oldest among them, a woman in her thirties but looking old beyond her years, stepped forward and took her place as leader of the group. She had always seen and heard things that the others could not. Shadows that floated down dark corridors when no one else was looking, disembodied voices that called just out of sight on nights when the moon hid from sight and she was alone. Yes, she was special; only she had the power, from whatever source, to open the gate allowing entrance for herself and her comrades. It was a task that she accepted with a grim resolve; she knew that this must be done, but apprehension filled her nonetheless. It is frightening on the other side.

She concentrated, her mind becoming detached from her surroundings and her comrades. In her mind she saw the door open, its macabre black light spilling into the hallways of her mind. As she opened her eyes, she saw the same black light illuminate the quiet plain in which they all stood. Her comrades looked at one another and smiled a weak smile; the time had come. They stepped forward to join their comrade as she relaxed, and hefted their weapons menacingly. They were ready. Together, they stepped through, the door closing swiftly and silently behind them.

On Salisbury plain all was quiet and there was no sign that they had ever come.

It was not dark as they thought it would be. The black light came from the open portal, not from their destination. What lay before them was far worse.

They were alone. A terrifying orange light permeated this world, painting everything in its grotesque hue. There were none of the peaceful blues and greens inherent to the world from which they just came. This was an alien landscape and they were acutely aware that they were intruders.

They began their journey, slowly and carefully, paranoia slowly creeping up the length of their spines and sending chills throughout their bodies. They would have to be careful here; they knew of the inhabitants, the Reavers, but they were ignorant as to their world. It was their battlefield and the advantage was theirs. This would be an uphill battle at best, and not all, if any, were expected to survive.

For many long and tense moments the adventurers wondered if anything inhabited this realm. Its utterly silent nature was disturbing to the group, infecting them with a type of fear unknown before. A stand-up fight would be far better than not knowing what lurked just around the corner.

It seemed that their wish would come true.

Before them stood the enemy that they had come to vanquish. The evil, tusked beasts stood in front of them, blocking their advance, with a sinister expression glorifying their twisted humanoid faces. Without a word, the monsters rushed en masse at the adventurers, intent upon giving them a welcome that they would not soon forget, should they live to remember it.

The adventurers hefted their weapons and took aim at their unnatural attackers. It was going to be a long day.

## The Meta-verse

The meta-verse as we know it is composed of three parts: the interstices, the universe and the proto-dimensions. Each is separate and independent but vital to reality as a whole. Without the universe we would not exist, as it is our parent dimension and also home to the proto-dimensions, which would not exist without that foundation of reality. In turn, without the interstices, the universe and the proto-dimensions — islands of order in a sea of chaos — would cease to exist as they would have no foundation to rest upon. Thus, Reality, governed by the metaphysical laws that bind it, is dependent upon its three parts.

### The Interstices

The interstices are the foundation of the metaverse. They are vast seas of disorder in which the universe and the proto-dimensions float. It is in these seas of chaos that the universe as we know came to exist and the home to it now. Contrary to popular opinion, the interstices are not a proto-dimension despite sharing many characteristics with them. Instead, they are an endless expanse of black from which can be seen both the universe and the proto-

dimensions. They appear as shadowy forms floating silently in the void.

The interstices are identical to the astral proto-dimension with the exception of how one travels there. While the traveler would reach the astral proto-dimension in mind only, leaving his physical form behind, the traveler would travel to the interstices as a complete being, bringing his physical self into this realm as well. Yet, this is not wise as the interstices, being the seas of chaos and disorder that they are, are not very hospitable to travelers and are very difficult to exit.

### The Universe

The universe is the realm to which we belong and in which we exist. It was created billions of years ago when a great explosion shook the interstices. This was the Big Bang and it was the beginning of the universe (although it was much different then) and the proto-dimensions. After the Big Bang, the reality that we now inhabit began to form; stars, planets, everything that we see on a clear night and more began to take shape and over the millennium this evolution of sorts has brought us to where we are now. Within the confines of our universe also exist the proto-dimensions.

### The Proto-Dimensions

The proto-dimensions are islands of alternate realities co-existing within our own. They are the reflections of possibility in the mirror of the universe. The varying realities of the proto-dimensions are endless as is the imagination and any possible actuality can be entered through a dimensional portal. Within that realm of possibility exist many of the horrors that now plague mankind. Among these is the Ravager, whose proto-dimension, known as Torment, is a foul, forbidding place filled with disembodied screams and the corpses of the freshly dead, ready to be consumed. As there are an infinite number of realities to be explored in the proto-dimensions, the Referee should feel free to create whatever environments he so desires.

### Types of Proto-Dimensions

**Fragmentary:** Fragmentary proto-dimensions are perhaps the strangest of all the alternate realities in the universe and some seem quite unnatural. Most, if not

all, break at least some of the laws of physics and some discard them completely, opting for their own laws that govern physical action within the borders of the proto-dimension.

These proto-dimensions are usually quite small and, as a rule, there is no native life that inhabits them. In some cases, there have been creatures of one sort or another that has been transplanted and has managed to survive but this is rare.

Within the fragmentary proto-dimensions there is also another type of reality: the pocket proto-dimension. This type of dimension, although separate from its parent dimension, is not independent of it. They are quite small, usually only a few cubic meters of reality floating in the vast sea of the interstices, and are, for the most part, useless to the proto-dimensional traveler.

**Halflands:** Halflands are a lot like the fragmentary proto-dimension but they are somewhat less surreal. Within the confines of these dimensions, the traveler will find reality somewhat akin to the reality of earth but usually twisted in some fashion. The laws of physics, as we know them, usually apply to the halflands although they are not as concrete and infallible as they are in the universe.

An example of a halfland proto-dimension would be the reality known as Grove. Grove is a reality that consists entirely of trees. It is very pretty and somewhat peaceful although devoid of anything except trees; no matter how far in any direction that the traveler goes, that is all that he will find. Another good example of a halflands proto-dimension would be that of Gothic found in the Proto-Dimensions Sourcebook.

There is life in the halflands but it is somehow different, always inferior and never sentient. These lifeforms are nothing more than replicas; shadows of the same creature found in the universe. In the halflands, you may make a person's acquaintance but rest assured that it is not real and not to be trusted.

**Splinterlands:** The splinterlands are the closest realities to that of earth but they are inferior nonetheless. They are consistent and remain stable in the constant upheavals of the universe. Their laws of

physics also closely match our own and typically remain steady. These are the true shadows of the reality that we know although, at times, they can be quite bizarre.

The splinterlands are the most real of all the proto-dimensions and, like earth, tend to contain more than one reality within the confines of their borders. It is the splinterlands where players will most likely have the majority of their proto-dimensional adventures.

**Quantum Proto-Dimensions:** The quantum proto-dimensions are shadows of the dimension that they are attached to. A proto-dimension can have any number of quantum dimensions associated with it. In the quantum proto-dimensions, time is not a constant as it is on earth or even in some of the splinterlands. Instead, time is usually compressed or stretched to an extent, variable with each quantum dimension.

The quantum proto-dimensions can be very useful to a minion hunter who is in a hurry or who needs to heal rather quickly but caution must be taken: the dark races also use the quantum dimensions for the same purpose and the odds of encountering these horrors are high.

### Means of Proto-dimensional Travel

There are three very distinct means of travel to and from the proto-dimensions. First, an empath with the dimension walk skill can open a portal that can be entered

by himself and other, possibly non-empathic, individuals as well. Second is the use of one of the many types of Darktek gadgets specifically created for this purpose. Although these gadgets may prove handy, the first step is acquiring one and that is not always easy. The third and final method of proto-dimensional travel is by a fixed device that was created for the purpose of opening a dimensional door. Examples of these are Stonehenge, the Incan and Egyptian pyramids and other stone monuments found around the world.

When travelling in the proto-dimensions, the minion hunter must also content with the Discontinuity factor and the Assimilation effect of the given proto-dimension. To put it simply, the Discontinuity factor is a relative measurement of how strange the proto-dimension is in comparison to the reality of earth with a rating of '1' signifying this similarity. The higher the Discontinuity factor, the stranger the environment, the farther it is from earth and the relative extent of a darkling presence. All these must be factored into the Discontinuity number.

Assimilation represents the difficulty incurred by the minion hunter attempting function in the varying environments encountered in the proto-dimensions. The Assimilation Effect Number represents the amount of damage a character will suffer as a result of entering an environment whose physical laws are so different from their own world. Characters will begin to suffer





damage 30 minutes after assimilation and they will continue to do so until they forsake the proto-dimension for one whose physics are closer to what they are accustomed to. Like the Discontinuity factor, the higher the Assimilation effect, the stranger the physics inherent in the proto-dimension.

## Shades of Despair

### An Adventure into the Realm of the Reaver

Shades of Despair is a short, simple adventure introducing characters and referees to proto-dimensional travel in Dark Conspiracy. Its purpose is to acquaint the players with adventuring in the proto-dimensions as well as educating the referee on the myriad possibilities inherent in proto-dimensional travel. Referees are advised to use this scenario as a blueprint and expand upon the format for future adventures. Players are advised not to read beyond this point.

*"Sometimes I wish reality could be simple. A hundred years ago alternate dimensions were nothing but fairy tales and fiction. Today, they're cold, hard, lethal facts. Damn. I think I was born a hundred years too late."*

— Zena Marley (Early 21st-century mercenary-philosopher)

Name: Torment

Type: Splinterland

Discontinuity: 11

Assimilation Effect Number: 15

### Setting the Mood

The mood of this scenario is panic and disgust. The players should be made aware of the imperative nature of their assignment. The Ravagers, from the safety of their home dimension, Torment, are close to completing a device that would destroy the proto-dimensional barrier between earth and their dimension to allow a mass invasion by these hideous, flesh-eating fiends. The players are asked to journey

into this dimension and destroy this machine before it can be put to use.

Disgust will play a part in the adventure when the characters finally reach their destination: Torment. It is here that they will discover the true nature of the Ravager firsthand. Torment is a bleak and desolate place. Its oppressive, gloomy atmosphere seems to invade the soul and depresses the will of even the hardest minion hunters. The entire dimension is bathed in a macabre orange light, somewhat akin to the outer glow of a flame, but this does nothing to lighten the atmosphere of the dimension. It is a foul place filled with the screams of the dying and littered with mountains of corpses. These corpses are stored openly and are later used for food. The corpses represent countless races found throughout the proto-dimensions and among them are many human bodies as well. The Ravagers consider human flesh quite a delicacy.

This adventure is broken down into three parts. The first part will consist of the character briefing and the beginning of their journey. The second part will be the actual journey to Stonehenge, the portal that will allow them entrance into Torment. The third part of the story will be the actual adventure in the Ravager proto-dimension and the destruction of the inter-dimensional device.

### Part One: Of Imperative Nature

The characters are called to an abandoned warehouse just outside the city. They are told that the Ravagers have devised an instrument capable of destroying the barrier between earth and their home dimension of Torment. It is not known what their plans may be once they have accomplished this but everyone who knows of this foul plan is expecting the worst. The characters are informed that the most expedient avenue into the Ravager's home dimension is through the ancient circle of stones known as Stonehenge. Thousands of years ago it was created as a barrier to prevent such horrors from entering our world but now the gatekeepers are gone and it stands as nothing more than a testimony to the past. Time is running out.

The man who explains the situation to the characters is a middle-aged man with dark brooding eyes. He is known simply as

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Black 7 to his associates and has never divulged his real name or even given an explanation. No one has ever asked.

Upon accepting this mission, the characters are led down a flight of stairs that were concealed by a trap door in the floor. They are then taken to the armory where they are told to arm themselves as they see fit. This is not a time for the characters to be modest as the dangers they will face are great and they will need all the weapons that they can carry. They are also given a map of how to find the machine once they arrive in Torment. Tell the characters that many minion hunters died to retrieve this information and that everyone hopes that they did not die in vain.

They are told of the imperative nature of their journey and that they must waste no time in arriving at their destination. As the players leave the warehouse, a light rain begins to fall from the gray, overcast sky.

### **Part Two: The Calm Before the Storm**

In this part of the story, the characters will journey to Stonehenge to enter the realm of the Ravager. The journey itself can be as eventful as the Referee desires. It is suggested to give the characters some resistance but not to overload them at this point; save your heavy ammunition for after they make the dimension walk. It will be too late to turn back then.

During this part of the story, build suspense and attempt to create an atmosphere of paranoia. Always lead the characters to believe that they are being followed, whether they are or not, and make every person that they come in contact seem to be hiding something.

Once they reach Salisbury Plain, offer them no more resistance. Stonehenge should be quiet and peaceful, hiding its true nature and giving the characters a false sense of security. It is now that their real adventure begins.

### **Part Three: To Walk Through Nightmares**

Once the characters enter the realm of the Ravager, they are instantly assaulted with the stench of rotting flesh and, as bodies in various stages of decay stretch as



far as the eye can see, they have no doubt as to its origin.

For a short time, offer the characters no resistance. Allow them to be lulled into a false sense of safety and then hit them hard. Assault them with wave after wave of Ravagers, intent on ripping them to shreds. Barely give them time to reload their weapons before hitting them with another wave of their foul enemy. It is suggested, however, that you use some discretion in this attack. Do not give the characters more than they can handle or they will lose hope too quickly and not enjoy the game. Give them a fighting chance but make them fight hard.

Have this battle continue all the way to the machine itself. Once they find it, the characters will discover that it is now fully functional and was about to be implemented in the Ravager's horrid plan. It is here that the characters will encounter the most resistance yet; once they destroy the machine, the remaining creatures will scurry into the orange depths of Torment.

The characters will find no resistance in making their way back to the portal but when they arrive at the designated area, they will discover where the Ravagers disappeared to. Make the characters' escape very difficult, perhaps having to jump through the portal as it begins to close. Make them really relish their safety once they are on the other side.

Once they make it through the portal, they will find themselves back at Stonehenge. It is just the way that they left it; a light rain falls on the gray, English countryside and a small flock of sheep graze in the distance.

It is time for the characters to go home.

**The Ravager**

**Strength:** 14

**Constitution:** 13

**Agility:** 10

**Intelligence:** 7

**Education:** 6

**Charisma:** 8

**Empathy:** 7

**Initiative:** 5

**Move:** 3/10/20/35

**Skill/Dam.:** 8/2D6

# **Appear:** On earth-1D6; On Torment-Referee's discretion

While on earth, the Ravagers constantly project a human image. Empathics who can see beyond their disguise are horrified at the vision that assaults them.

The Ravagers stand two meters tall and their skin is a deep blood red. They have horns that originate from either side of their head and curl menacingly toward the front. Their claws are excessively long and are capable of ripping a human to shreds in short order. They also possess a long, powerful tail.

They are calculating, murderous monsters with no compassion or mercy for anything living. It is not wise to attempt to bargain or ally yourself with them as they will betray, murder, and consume you at their first opportunity. They are evil incarnate, in thought and deed.

**What Now?**

Now that the characters have been introduced to the proto-dimensions, they can continue their travels through the various realities, discovering the infinite possibilities that lay outside the confines of earth. They have taken their first great step in this brutal war by taking the fight to the enemy. Many more adventures as daring as this one will be required and many minion hunters will die before this war is finally won.

Once they return to earth, they will be welcomed as heroes. They will be told that, because of their courage, they have instilled a little more hope in the world. They will also be reminded that the war is not over yet. In fact, it has just begun. □