



Dawn of the Black Moon



“Dergar, we must hide,” yells Gilead trying to shout over the howling of the wind, thunder, and rain. Water cascades are pouring down her armor and flickers of moon fire shine here and there. This is a sign that the Avel moon magic is particularly strong on this mountain peak. Dergar, who is walking in front of Gilead, is barely able to stand anymore. He’s trying to lean on a giant stone when it crumbles to pieces under a stream of water. The wizard falls. Gilead jumps forward and grabs Dergar, then she pulls him onto a rock shelf. When lightning strikes, for a second she sees eerie shadows sneaking among stones... She doesn’t recognize them, but she knows they are hungry and have claws. There are too many of them.

“Dergar!” she shouts again, this time right next to the wizard’s ear. “Maybe it’s not the peak we’re looking for! We should hide and think this through.”

The wizard nods, and a few minutes later they’re in a small cave that they passed a little earlier. It stinks here, and the ground is covered with old bones. However, it’s dry, and when Dergar uses words of power to disperse the darkness, it even begins to feel a bit cozy. The wizard pulls a thick tome from his backpack, full of notes, diagrams, and calculations. Gilead is aware that this is the work of his life, an attempt to describe all of the moons of Avel in detail. But even a child knows how difficult this is – there are so many of the moons, and the gods that live there protect their secrets.

However, Dergar has been sent here by Queen Sarisa herself, so Gilead must try and protect the wizard. Which very often means protecting him from himself.

“What are we looking for on this cursed mountain?” she asks more out of boredom than real curiosity.

“Och! Venerable knight!” Dergar’s old face wrinkles up as he smiles and his wet mustache ruffles up with excitement. “We’re looking for the Greatest Discovery in History! For such a long time I couldn’t figure out why my calculations didn’t make sense, something was missing. Why are the moons moving the way they are? Why are the oldest chronicles missing pages? What is the Healing Jewel really protecting our kingdom from? There seemed to be more and more questions until I found an answer during one of my trips. It’s... Kurodar!”

The storm calmed down and the last word of the wizard was said in a moment of complete silence. It echoes from the walls of the cave, mountains, and rocks. Then, as if summoned by a foul prayer, thousands of creatures start to howl. Gilead leaps to her feet and, pulling Dergar with her, starts to run to the peak. The storm calms down, revealing a starry sky. The knight sees red eyes glinting in the darkness. The lands of Avel were never safe, but this was the first time she witnessed so many monsters gather in one place. Dergar keeps jabbering. Maybe that’s his way to fight the fear.

“Yes, yes. Black Moon! It exists, Gilead! And tonight is the night when we will see it! We will prove its existence!”

They reach the peak. The wizard draws magical symbols on the surrounding stones and suddenly the sky above Gilead’s head seems to come closer, stars and moons – and there are at least ten of them visible now – become larger and sharper. Dergar starts to move and point his finger from one to another. Gilead, fascinated with the magic happening before her eyes, is not able to ignore the red eyes approaching from everywhere.

“There, Gilead, there! There, where no stars are visible!”

He’s right. Between the Silver Lady and Purple Son, obscuring all the other stars, dawdles a black circle. The longer Gilead looks at it, the bigger it seems. The blackness spills over the whole sky, pushing away all other moons, devouring stars. It seems to be looking at the knight and greedily reaching for Avel.

“Oh no!” Dergar’s moan pulls her out of a trance. The wizard is feverishly flipping through his book, ripping out pages, moving cards, fixing notes, and literarily pulling his hair out of his head. “We’re doomed!”

Monsters surrounding the peak begin to crawl down from the rocks, slowly approaching the circle of light created by the magical symbols. Gilead notices goblins, undead skeletons, something with wings and claws. Yet, the monsters are not attacking. They are all looking up – to the Black Moon – where, just like an evil smirk, there emerges a fiery crack. Thanks to Dergar’s magnifying magic, Gilead sees pieces of rock tearing off from the globe. One of them, swirling majestically, is coming down towards Avel. Meanwhile, Dergar is still feverishly checking his book, spilling words from his mouth.

“Kurodar, the god of the Black Moon, hates Avel and always wanted its destruction! However, because of the Healing Jewel, he couldn’t really do anything directly. So he sent his children, terrible beasts, to destroy the jewel... That’s why all the other gods banished him into the darkness between the stars.”

Dergar, standing right in front of the knight, holds her shoulders tight. Around them, monsters are crowding, surrounding, watching, fighting between each other, but their eyes are still focused on Kurodar.

“Gilead, you must warn the queen! Prepare yourselves, for when the Beast of the Black Moon comes, it’ll immediately begin to march towards the castle! And if the Healing Jewel is destroyed...”

Suddenly the monsters, as if angered by mentioning the Jewel, begin their attack. Gilead’s sword shone with the magic of the Red Son. The knight pierces through a goblin, and pushes away a gargoyle with her shield, kneeling from the force of the attack. The Black Moon above her head seems to pulsate and mock them. Dergar’s magical staff releases a ray of thunderbolts, casting aside the swarm. When the monsters gather their strength to attack again, the wizard draws a series of magical symbols in the air, opening a moon path. But casting this ancient magic and maintaining the open portal is too much for Dergar.

“Go... Gilead... Warn... Save Avel!”

The monsters attack again. A wave of fangs and claws overwhelms Dergar, then turn towards Gilead. The knight jumps into the flickering portal. The last thing she sees when looking back is a black, fire cracked moon.



The audience hall in Avel Castle is full to the brim. Usually, the only people there are sick and the ones in need of the beneficial influence of the Healing Jewel. However, today the queen wants to announce something important. People are whispering, it has something to do with the recent problems: the forests and dark corners of Avel are full of monsters, and weird things are happening in the sky. Nights are no longer bright as the darkness engulfs stars and the gods of the moons are unwilling to answer prayers...

Suddenly the gates open and Queen Sarisa sits on the Moon Throne. Her face, framed with silver hair, is sad and serious. Next to her is the knight Gilead - she’s visibly limping and moving carefully as if she was in pain. The room fills with whispers of the crowd. Her wounds have to be serious if the Jewel didn’t heal them. The queen is also accompanied by the wizard’s apprentice, Mirko. The whispers become even louder. Where is Dergar?

The queen raises her hand and everyone goes quiet.

“Beloved subjects, I will not hide the truth from you,” the ruler begins to speak in her sonorous voice. “Difficult times are approaching and great danger is coming to Avel. From the darkness of the past, the blackness between the stars, Kurodar came back, the Black Moon. His child, the terrible Beast, will soon fall into our kingdom. And then it’ll begin its march towards the castle to destroy our Jewel!”

A wave of unease falls on the gathered, the whispers turn into buzz, and in that, cries can be heard. The queen lifts her hand again and awaits silence. When she speaks again, her voice is loud and vibrant.

“However, thanks to Dergar’s sacrafice, we will not be surprised. See here the brave and fearless people of Avel! Grab your weapons and go! We still have time to get ready for the battle. The Beast has been defeated once, we will defeat it again!

Uncover the secrets of Avel, find the needed moon magic, and improve your skills. And when Kurodar’s Beast emerges from the crater, it shall know the strength and bravery of the people of Avel!”

The queen rises and her upright and majestic posture creates the feeling of admiration in her subjects.

“Therefore I ask: which of you is ready to defend Avel?”



Adventurers, heroes, welcome to Avel, a world full of amazing creatures and places. A world where, both during the day and night, tens of moons are visible. Those magical celestial bodies – supposedly inhabited by gods – send their magical gifts to the people of Avel. Thanks to them, wizards like me create magic, druids help farmers take care of their crops, and children can play in air streams. Now,

unfortunately, there is no more time for that. As Kurodar the Black Moon comes close to Avel, its black magic has awoken the forces of evil. Forests, caves, and other dark places have always been inhabited by dangerous creatures, but now they creep out of their lairs, and their hateful eyes are focused on the castle. That is the home of the Healing Jewel. If it is destroyed, evil will take over Avel.

Guide to the beasts of Avel

Avel has never been a safe space. However, usually the monsters hid in the dark and distant places, and very rarely wandered to civilized regions that are protected by the magic of the Healing Jewel residing in the castle.

Encouraged by the dark influence of Kurodar and the incoming Beast, the monsters left their lairs... Thankfully, because of the

old scholars and adventurers (that more than once escaped the death from the jaws, claws, and tentacles) we have some knowledge about the dangerous monsters.

You should learn all this information too — it might save your lives as well!

Three moons, three groups

As the master Gammon (also called Ham) has proved, monsters are connected to the influence of three particular moons floating above Avel. Those three globes are:

Livid Sickle, seat of Mare, god of anger and filth. His servants are strange, intelligent fungi; creatures of dust and rocks, and recently also goblins.

Aventurine Shard, seat of the baleful god of the undead Zigza, whose power gives life to skeletons and grants vitality to vampires and other monsters from the scariest nightmares.

Umbri Dragon, seat of the god of evil dragons, monsters from swamps and other dark and wet places.

Now that the Kurodar shard is heading to Avel, and the Black Moon is once again visible in the sky, it became obvious that the three moons are subservient to their dark master. That is why the Beast has the attributes of all of them... but it's also vulnerable to magic and weapons that destroy the servants of those moons.

Bestiary

Here are short descriptions of the most common monsters that you will be forced to fight when defending the castle. Remember that there are other monsters in the wilderness as well...

Servants of the Livid Sickle



Fungus, The Fungi Ruler
These very interesting creatures are lead by the desire to infect everything with their spores. When the Livid Sickle is high in the sky, the Fungi Ruler climbs a hill and spreads its spores, which attack animals and people and change them into this creature's servants.



Fungi Servant
When the Fungi Ruler spores infect a weakened animal, it turns into a fungi servant. These creatures are incredibly aggressive but not very resistant to damage. The servants stun their victims and then take them to their master for subjugation.



Fungal thrall

People infected with the Fungi Ruler spores turn into fungal thralls. These creatures are more intelligent than servants, so they often set up traps for their victims. Maybe they retain slivers of memory about who they were, because they don't throw away the items they used before turning.



Twinmare vine

Some of the plants also become food for the Fungi Ruler's spores. They become incredibly mean and try to suffocate all other forms of life with their tendrils.



Golem

Golems are an interesting type of servant to Mare. It is said that this god is also a ruler of all choking dust and ashes. Sometimes, when the Livid Sickie disappears behind the horizon, a so called "Mare's whirlwind" rises — it's best to hide in your house then! It removes all air from the lungs, and should someone die because of it, they turn into ashes that settle on rocks. But the ash, like the fungi mentioned above, infects the rocks and turns it into dangerous golems. These creatures have only one goal: gather together and create an earth elemental. They will destroy anyone who tries to stop them.



Earth elemental

When enough golems gather together, they connect and create a powerful earth elemental. This creature mindlessly destroys anything around it, especially houses and cities, trying to create as much dust and ash as possible. Parents often scare their children that if they don't clean the house, an earth elemental will rise up out of it!



Goblin

Goblins are a curious type of dangerous creature. They don't really serve any of the moons, but give piety to the Dancing Comet, queen of the goblins — Karkora. It is believed that the Livid Sickie has made a treaty with Karkora, thus they now serve it. They attack by surprise, run away from an overwhelming force of their enemies, and mischievously pee in the bedrolls of adventurers sleeping in the forest.



Predator plant

Goblins grow this plant as food (small predator plants bite their tongues with their sharp tiny teeth) but the goblins often forget about those crops, which then grow to be dangerously big, becoming a hazard to travelers.

Servants of the Aventurine Shard



Vampire

No one knows when these creatures came to Avel. However, the ancient books suggest that they came directly from the Shard even before the moon was shattered. It is said that great hoards of vampires are asleep in various crevasses of the land and will wake when Zygza becomes whole again. Vampires feed on blood and the bitten victims sometimes turn into vampire servants. Vampires are usually very old and, during their lives, they collect valuable items.



Vampire servant

Wretches bitten by vampires turn into their servants — very weak but still very dangerous vampires.



Skeleton

Skeletons are the most common danger in the wilderness of Avel. That is the reason why most brawlers simply ignore them, which usually ends with a rapid escape or death. Skeletons can be very dangerous, especially in a group. They come to life when the green light of the Shard shines onto an unburied body. Skeletons are able to use weapons, their bones are covered with pieces of armor that they used when alive. After defeating such foes, it is worth burying the corpse with due reverence, which will stop them from rising again.



Lich

A lich is a necromancer skeleton, a powerful servant of Zigza who can directly reach for the light of its master and turn undead servants. This is a terrifying foe who especially detests followers of the Silver Lady. It is believed that the Lady was the one who shattered the seat of Zigza, thus creating the Aventurine Shard.



Werewolf

Legends say that during the war, some of the priests betrayed the Silver Lady, who in turn punished them by turning them into werewolves. This is the reason why those creatures are so vulnerable to silver and howl to the Silver Lady — some with anger, others with longing. It's a mystery if the priests are still alive, but it is known that a bite from these monsters can create another one.



Scarecrow

Scarecrows are especially mean servants of Zigza. They come to life when a skull (not the entire body) is lit up with the moon's brilliance. As a result, the skull begins to draw in objects that are in the vicinity, for example sticks, straw, or pieces of fabric. This in turn creates, not exactly a construct, not really an undead creature, but something that wanders roadless tracks and attacks everyone it can.



Barghest

A long time ago, when the Silver Lady shattered the seat of Zigza, shards of his moon hit Avel. Where they fell, dark, evil places appeared. Animals that wander there and drink the poisoned water or eat strange plants turn into undead, virulent creatures — barghests. According to the legends, when they are healed, they become eternally grateful to their saviors.



Wraiths and ghosts

Incorporeal undead that wander the world since the times of the god wars. Even though they don't remember their past lives, they burn with a constantly growing hatred of all living things.



Servants of the Umbri Dragon



Dragon

Even though the true, gigantic, legendary dragons have long left into the unknown, their smaller yet still-gigantic-for-humans offspring can still be found in swamps and caverns. These fire or acid breathing reptiles, covered in thick scales, love to keep trophies after defeating enemies. It is believed that, when the Umbri Dragon is in the new moon, the dragons gather to sing a gloomy hymn to their master. People who hear their song become incredibly greedy, that is why grabbers are said "to have heard the dragons' song".



Reptilian

Humanoid lizards living in villages scattered across swamps and forests. Until now, they usually didn't attack humans, and would even be known to trade with us. But now that the Umbri Dragon has summoned the reptilians to battle, they are crowding out of their hiding places and attacking villages. According to the court wizard Dergar's theory, the connection between reptilians and the Umbri Dragon may be severed, and the lizards might be released from the power of the evil god... but no one knows how to do this.



Reptilian shaman

Each reptilian village has a ruling shaman, or tribal wizard, that directs the magic of the Dragon. Don't be deceived by the weird dances and hissing songs of these creatures – this is the shamans' way to give you an itchy rash or make your ears grow hair!



Crust

Crusts, also called swamp leeches, are wild monsters that attack everything that moves. Leeches feed on the blood of their victims, therefore it's common to find bodies of hunted wretches and their valuables. Surprisingly, the skin of crusts is used to create various potions, that's why alchemists often hire adventurers to hunt for these creatures.



Swamp grub

Grubs are incredibly dangerous inhabitants of swamps. Usually they hide right under the surface of the ground, riverbed or overflow area. When they feel the vibrations of the ground, they attack the victim by surprise and swallow them with one bite. Some adventurers, for example the famous Gilead, claim that it's possible to fight your way out of the monster's belly and even find a useful item inside!



Cow toad

Imagine a toad. Maybe it's not the most beautiful of creatures, but it's certainly not dangerous. Now, imagine a toad the size of a cow, with a long, sticky, and thick as a rope tongue; and a jaw that can fit an entire adult human... Now also imagine that its skin is able to blend in with its surroundings, and that this creature is always hungry. If you hear a VERY loud croak, react quickly — or you'll end up in this cow toad's belly.



Threeleg

Threelegs are bizarre birds inhabiting the lands surrounding Avel castle. They like to hang upside down from cave vaults, trees, or even old houses. When they do they resemble shapeless black bags. When someone passes under them, threelegs spread their wings and start to quickly surround the victim. The air whistling in their horns has a hypnotizing effect on the future snack. According to some, when threelegs begin their whistling, it's best to drown it out by singing loudly — the funnier the song, the better!



Swamp snake

Swamp snakes are huge and ravenous creatures that never stop growing. Legends mention specimens that are able to encircle a wagon! What's interesting is the mutual hatred they share with dragons. Dragons believe that snakes often curry favor with the Umbri Dragon, as it is usually represented as a snake.