

The World of Shades and Shadows

Contributed by Michal Chodorek
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A Guide to the Otherworld

by Ingund of Brionne and Zythaar Darksoul

When the polar gates collapsed it allowed the magic of chaos to flow into the world. It flooded and soaked into everything in the mortal plane like a penetrating liquid. Over time it solidified forming a world made of pure chaos energy and magic that occupied the same space as the mortal world, creating a mirrored plane, known as Eira Esori – the Otherworld.

Despite the fact that it looks similar, it differs a lot from the material plane. They exist simultaneously, constantly interlacing each other, thus allowing wizards to draw upon the powers of the Otherworld, called the Winds of Magic. Since it is shaped not by matter, but magical energy, it does not possess many physical aspects of the physical world, yet its impact on the material plane is significant.

One way the Otherworld influences the material plane is by creating moods in certain places, depending on which of the eight winds is dominant and is particularly strong in the area. For example, around a grail chapel one would be feeling light and strengthened for the winds of Hysh and Ghyran are strong there. In graveyards, on the other hand, one would constantly feel some eerie presence, watching one's every move. The Sadness and regret felt behind every corner is thanks to the winds of Shyish and Ulgu. In the Otherworld, where the winds of magic are actually shaping the reality, a grail chapel would seem very bright and warm, whereas the graveyard would be dark and twisted, with whispers of ghosts and screams of souls being tormented in the realm of chaos.

Another way, in which the Otherworld is linked to the material plane is by creating a small imprint of every living beings in the Otherworld called the Essence. Priests refer to it as the Soul.

An Essence is created at birth and immediately gets bonded with its physical body in the material plane. It is the Essence that allows its owner to feel the mood created by Winds of Magic. The Essence feels them flowing through it and sends a signal back to the material plane which body receives as an aura. If one's spirit is particularly strong, one can use this bond to channel a small portion of magical energy into the material plane. Such entities, through rigorous training can become mages and wizards. Those individuals walk a narrow path between two ledges. If they reach too far and channel too much energy, their minds will explode, leaving only an empty carcass. To avoid it, they have to be undisturbed and completely clear minded, yet they have to remain aware of the fact that should they open their minds too much, the destructive chaos daemons would have dragged them into their realm, convicting them for an eternal suffering. Damsels also have a connection to this realm. When the lady takes them to her Isle though they cannot access the otherworld themselves they can be taken there by the fey or the lady to be trained in the magical arts (even when they travel there they are barely, a ghost so slight is their essence) and it is through the Otherworld that their telepathy works.

All creatures have essences, just some have more substantial forms of it than others. An animal's essence will be barely

visible and detectable, more like a scent cloud. An essence coming from a human, would be slightly stronger and more concentrated, like a mist or vapour. Elves and dwarfs have the most concentrated essences, formed into gleaming balls or even spirits. This is what accounts for longevity of those two races. However their essence loses its form, slowly dissolving into the realm and therefore no elf is immortal. They do age and would probably die as normal after few thousand years, but since they are a dying race and every elf regularly participates in battles, none had ever seen an elf dying of age. When it comes to dwarfs, the case is subtly different. Their essence is unique, immune to the devastating effects of chaos energy but at the price of immunity to magic as well. This is both a flaw and merit. They cannot use magic against their foes, but are highly resistant to the one enemy's using. Both races, though having the strongest essences of all living beings are unable to interact with the spectral plane. Their spirits would take shape of ghosts and shades.

But there are beings with essences so strong, even those of elves and dwarfs succumb to nothingness – Vampires. They are creatures that had died in the mortal plane during their creation called the Blood Kiss. This “gift” has a terrible mechanism. A man gifted with it slowly starts to die. Pain, both physical and mental, is almost indescribable but it is present as bit by bit, the body is being destroyed, it's life energy flowing away, dragged into the Otherworld. This creates an imprint so strong it becomes able to actually interact with the spectral realm. Since it is much stronger, it resists time and does not dissolve as the essence of elves, thus ensuring immortality. It has great price, however. The essence is stronger than the vampire's body so it will slowly drag it's material counterpart into the Otherworld. In fact, the body is only a manifestation of the essence in the material plane. As such, the vampire is forced to feed on vital energy of other beings, therefore devouring it's essence, to be able to maintain its physical form. When a vampire is left without any form of blood for too long, his body will be eventually destroyed and the vampire will be thrown back into the Otherworld. The same applies when his body gets destroyed: the vampire does not die, it merely reverts to its spectral form and becomes trapped in the Otherworld until it gathers enough energy and strength to re-manifest itself again.

This is no easy task. It requires a place of great magical influence in the material plane and very rich in all energies of magic, both colourful and chaotic on the spectral side. But even with such place, the vampire needs someone to open a gate between the two realms, creating a tunnel, through which the essence may re-manifest in the material plane. This can be done only by a very powerful and skilled wizard, for it can easily work quite the other way, destroying the wizard. The third and last element, needed to completely restore the vampire is a large amount of vital energy. With all those three elements provided, the vampire can rebuild it's manifestation.

Some of the vampires can channel their essence to reinforce their body. This allows them to feed less often than ordinary vampires. The Blood Dragons use their strong will to maintain the manifestation whereas the Necrarches use their magic. Some Necrarches have an essence so strong, that combined with their magical abilities, they can travel freely between the two realms. They still require a place of great magical potential, but they don't need external help, nor large amounts of blood. This leaves a Necrarch vulnerable to attack for the first few minutes after re-manifestation, but allows him to bypass obstacle he would not be able to breach in the material plane.

There are also other examples of essence based creatures: wraiths and forest spirits.

Forest Spirits have never had a form on the mortal plane, however they may inhabit certain lumps of wood to give themselves a form which allows them to interact with the material plane.

Wraiths are men who have failed the long and challenging path of a necromancer and have slipped into the Otherworld permanently. But with some aid of another necromancer, they can enter the physical world using the necromancer as a hub. If he stops channelling them into the world they are banished from it and immediately return to the Otherworld.

No matter how strong the essence is, it still can be destroyed either with a magical weapon on the mortal plane or by

travelling to the Otherworld and killing it there, but it is not destroyed completely. It is merely returned to its constitutive chaos energy. Through very powerful and complex spells an essence can be rebuilt, allowing the body to be raised and brought back to life. The more complex the essence was, the harder it is to rebuild. Time also matters when it comes to rebuilding of an essence. Over time, the particles that once formed the essence, could have been drawn to form another essence. Such particles cannot be used again, so the rebuilt essence will always be weaker and less stable than originally, thus making it even more difficult. That said, even the most powerful and immortal being can be eventually slain, provided it's done enough times.