

The Corvid's Curse

A D&D 5th Edition Horror Adventure for Characters Level 5-7

Adventure Background

In the shadow-draped village of Ravenshollow, an ancient curse has awakened. For generations, the Blackfeather family has served as the village's protectors, wielding druidic magic to keep the wilderness at bay. But when the last heir, Mordecai Blackfeather, committed an unspeakable act of hubris against the natural order, the very creatures he once commanded turned against him—and the entire village pays the price.

Now, a murder of crows unnumbered darkens the sky above Ravenshollow. They speak in human voices, whisper secrets of the dead, and drive men to madness with their relentless cawing. The villagers cower behind shuttered windows while the corvids grow bolder, more intelligent, and infinitely more malevolent with each passing night.

The party arrives as the horror reaches its crescendo, drawn by desperate pleas for aid or perhaps by darker omens that pull them inexorably toward this accursed place.

Adventure Hooks

- **The Desperate Summons:** A blood-stained letter arrives, written in a shaking hand: "They speak... they speak with voices of the dead. Come quickly, before we all go mad."
- **Ominous Portents:** Crows have been following the party for days, always watching, sometimes speaking words in voices not their own
- **Professional Interest:** The party's reputation for dealing with supernatural threats has reached desperate ears
- **Personal Stakes:** One character receives a message that a loved one is trapped in Ravenshollow

Chapter 1: Arrival in Ravenshollow

Village Description: Ravenshollow sits in a valley surrounded by ancient pines that whisper secrets to the wind. The village itself appears abandoned at first glance—shutters drawn tight, doors barred, streets empty save for the occasional scurrying figure. But it is the sky that draws immediate attention. Thousands upon thousands of crows perch on every rooftop, fence post, and tree branch. They sit in perfect silence, watching with intelligent black eyes that seem to peer directly into one's soul.

The silence is more unnerving than any cacophony could be. No dogs bark, no children play, no merchants hawk their wares. Even the wind seems muted, as if nature itself holds its breath in this cursed place.

The Corvid Welcome: As the party enters the village proper, the crows begin to speak. Not all at once, but in a growing chorus of human voices—some the party recognizes, others alien and disturbing:

"Turn back... turn back while you still can..." "She loved me once, before the earth claimed her..." "The tree... the tree remembers what he did..." "Mordecai... Mordecai... Mordecai..."

Sanity Check: Each character must make a DC 13 Wisdom saving throw. Those who fail take 1d4 psychic damage and become unnerved (disadvantage on the next ability check they make).

Key NPCs and Initial Encounters

Father Matthias Crane (Priest)

- AC 13, HP 27, Speed 25 ft.
- **Appearance:** Gaunt man in his sixties, prematurely white hair, priest's robes torn and stained. Dark circles under bloodshot eyes suggest sleepless nights.
- **Manner:** Nervous, constantly glancing at windows, speaks in whispers. Clutches a silver holy symbol.

Location: St. Corvina's Chapel (the only building with doors still open)

Initial Meeting: *"Thank the heavens... visitors who haven't fled or... or worse. I am Father Crane, keeper of this doomed flock. Three weeks now since the curse began. Three weeks of voices in the dark, of words that shouldn't be spoken by beaks and tongues not meant for human speech."*

Key Information Father Crane Provides:

- *"It started the night Mordecai Blackfeather returned to the village. He'd been gone a year, studying in the far cities. Came back... changed. Wrong."*
- *"The old druid circle at the heart of Thornwood—that's where his family drew their power. Something happened there. Something blasphemous."*
- *"The crows... they know things. They speak of the dead, reveal secrets better left buried. Mrs. Ashford went mad when they told her about her husband's affair. Young Tom Fletcher took his own life when they described what awaited him beyond the veil."*
- *"Mordecai's still out there, in the Thornwood. The crows protect him now, serve him. But I fear... I fear he no longer commands them."*

Margaret Thorne (Commoner - Village Innkeeper)

- AC 10, HP 4, Speed 30 ft.
- **Appearance:** Middle-aged woman, once robust but now gaunt from stress. Keeps a loaded crossbow within reach.
- **Manner:** Suspicious of outsiders, protective of remaining villagers. Speaks in short, clipped sentences.

Location: The Crooked Crow Inn (ironic name, now fitting)

Initial Reaction: Peers through barely opened door, crossbow visible. *"Strangers? In this cursed place? Either you're very brave or very foolish. Come in quickly, before they see you... before they start talking again."*

Information Margaret Provides:

- *"Half the village has fled. The other half... some went mad, some took their own lives, some just... disappeared into the woods after the crows called to them."*
- *"The Blackfeather family's been protecting this village for two hundred years. Druids, every one of them. But Mordecai... something broke in him when his sister died last year."*
- *"Strange folk came through just before this started. Scholars, they claimed. Asked lots of questions about the old druid circle. Paid well for information about the Blackfeather family rituals."*
- *"You want my advice? Turn around and leave. This place is damned, and whatever Mordecai's become... it's spreading."*

Dr. Elias Ravenscroft (Noble - Village Physician)

- AC 11, HP 9, Speed 30 ft.
- **Appearance:** Thin man in his fifties, meticulously dressed despite circumstances. Hands shake from either fear or exhaustion.
- **Manner:** Clinical, tries to rationalize the supernatural. Increasingly desperate as his logic fails.

Location: His home/medical practice, windows covered with black cloth

Initial Meeting: *"Mass hysteria, surely. Collective delusion brought on by stress and superstition. But then... then they started speaking to me in my dear departed wife's voice, and I... I cannot explain what science cannot measure."*

Key Information Dr. Ravenscroft Provides:

- *"I've documented seventeen cases of what I can only term 'supernatural psychosis.' Patients claim the crows reveal intimate details of deceased loved ones."*
- *"The phenomenon centers around the old druid circle. I've measured temperature anomalies, electromagnetic disturbances... things that shouldn't exist according to natural law."*
- *"Mordecai came to me the night before this began. He was... different. His eyes had changed—too bright, too knowing. He spoke of 'bridging the gap between life and death' and 'giving voice to the voiceless.'"*
- *"Several villagers have reported seeing figures in the woods—people who should be dead, walking among the crows. I fear Mordecai has done something that cannot be undone."*

Chapter 2: The Village Investigation

The Abandoned Houses

The Fletcher Home A modest cottage with broken windows and a door hanging ajar. Inside, furniture is overturned and scratch marks cover every surface—too many and too deep to be made by human hands.

Room Description: The main room is in chaos. Furniture lies overturned, papers scattered across the floor, and deep gouges mark the wooden walls and floorboards. Black feathers drift in corners like morbid snow. The air smells of decay and something else—something like old parchment and grave earth.

Investigation Results:

- *Investigation DC 12:* Young Tom Fletcher's journal lies open on a table, final entry readable: "They tell me I will die screaming in the dark. They describe the pain in detail, the loneliness beyond. I cannot... I will not..."
- *Investigation DC 15:* Claw marks on the walls form patterns—not random scratches but deliberate symbols in a language that hurts to look at
- *Perception DC 16:* A faint scratching sound comes from within the walls, as if something is trapped inside the wood itself
- *Arcana DC 14:* The symbols are crude approximations of necromantic formulae, but written by someone—or something—that doesn't fully understand their meaning

The Ashford Estate The largest house in the village, now empty and foreboding. Mrs. Ashford's madness led her to cover every surface with frantic writings before she disappeared into the Thornwood.

Room Description: Every wall, door, and piece of furniture bears writing in various hands and media—ink, charcoal, what appears to be blood. The words repeat obsessively: "He loved another," "Twenty years of lies," "The crows know truth," "Death reveals all secrets." Mirrors throughout the house have been shattered, their fragments scattered across the floor like silver tears.

Investigation Results:

- *Investigation DC 10:* The writing becomes increasingly erratic as it progresses through the house, suggesting Mrs. Ashford's deteriorating mental state
- *Investigation DC 14:* Among the mad scribbles are accurate details about villagers' private lives—information no one should know
- *Investigation DC 18:* Hidden beneath newer writing are older symbols, similar to those found in the Fletcher home but more sophisticated
- *Insight DC 16:* The progression of writing suggests Mrs. Ashford was receiving information from an external source, not merely imagining things

St. Corvina's Chapel

Main Chapel Description: A modest stone chapel dedicated to a local saint, St. Corvina, who legend says could speak with birds. Wooden pews face a simple altar bearing a carved raven with outstretched wings. Candlelight flickers across stained glass windows depicting scenes of communion between humans and corvids. The air smells of incense and something else—feathers and dried blood.

The Blasphemous Additions: Since the curse began, Father Crane has added protective elements that border on the heretical. Salt lines cross every threshold, iron nails are driven into window frames, and black cloth drapes cover anything reflective.

Investigation Results:

- *Religion DC 13:* St. Corvina was said to understand the speech of crows and ravens, using them as messengers between the living and dead
- *Investigation DC 15:* Recent additions to the chapel include books on exorcism, banishment rituals, and protection from undead
- *Arcana DC 16:* Father Crane's protective measures show knowledge of supernatural threats beyond normal priestly training

Father Crane's Private Study: Behind the altar, a small room serves as Father Crane's study and living quarters. Here, the priest's growing desperation is evident.

Study Description: Books lie open on every surface—religious texts mixed with treatises on the supernatural. Maps of the village are marked with symbols denoting "safe houses" (very few) and "lost souls" (far too many). A journal records Father Crane's increasingly frantic attempts to understand and combat the curse.

Father Crane's Journal Entries: *"Day 1: The crows have begun speaking. Mrs. Pemberton claims they told her about her sister's death—details only the family knew. Mass hysteria, surely."*

"Day 7: I can no longer deny what I witness. These creatures possess knowledge of the dead. They speak with voices I recognize—parishioners lost to time, loved ones long buried."

"Day 14: The barrier between life and death has been torn. I see figures in the woods—translucent, wrong. The crows serve as heralds for something far more sinister."

"Day 21: God forgive me, I begin to understand. Mordecai has not raised the dead—he has given the dead a voice through the living. But the price... the price is the sanity of all who listen."

Chapter 3: The Thornwood and the Druid Circle

Journey to the Thornwood

Forest Description: The Thornwood stretches for miles beyond Ravenshollow, its ancient trees reaching toward a sky obscured by an ever-present canopy of wings. The deeper the party ventures, the more unnatural the forest becomes. Trees grow in impossible spirals, their bark bearing faces of the long dead. Paths shift when not observed directly, and the very air grows thick with the weight of accumulated sorrow.

Supernatural Encounters:

- **The Whispering Trees:** *Perception DC 15* reveals that the trees themselves whisper secrets in voices of the dead
- **False Paths:** *Survival DC 16* needed to avoid becoming lost as the forest actively resists intrusion
- **Spectral Watchers:** Translucent figures observe from the treeline—the spirits of those whose voices the crows have stolen

Random Encounters (Roll 1d6 every 30 minutes):

1. **Crow Parliament:** 2d10 crows suddenly surround the party, speaking simultaneously in the voice of a dead child: "*Turn back, or join us in the endless watching...*"
2. **Spectral Guide:** A ghostly figure beckons the party toward a hidden path that leads directly to the druid circle
3. **The Lost Villager:** They encounter someone from Ravenshollow, but they speak only in questions and seem not to recognize the living
4. **Corvid Mimicry:** The crows begin perfectly imitating the party's voices, creating confusion and paranoia
5. **Temporal Distortion:** The party experiences moments from the past—seeing the Blackfeather family's rituals, Mordecai's sister's death
6. **The Calling:** Each party member hears a voice from their past calling them deeper into the woods (Wisdom save DC 15 or become charmed for 10 minutes)

The Ancient Druid Circle

Approaching the Circle: The trees part to reveal a circular clearing perhaps fifty feet across. Standing stones twice the height of a person ring the space, each carved with symbols that seem to writhe in peripheral vision. At the center grows an enormous oak tree, its trunk twisted into an almost human form. Thousands of crows perch motionless on every branch, their silence more ominous than any cacophony.

The Central Oak: This tree is ancient beyond measure, its roots delving deep into the earth while its branches reach toward the heavens. But something is wrong—the bark weeps a dark substance, faces press outward from within the wood as if trying to escape, and the very air around it shimmers with unnatural energy.

Investigation Results:

- *Nature DC 16*: The tree is far older than any oak should be, possibly predating human settlement in the region
- *Arcana DC 18*: The tree serves as a conduit between the material plane and the realm of the dead
- *Investigation DC 20*: Recent ritual circles have been carved around the tree's base, still stained with blood and strange substances
- *Perception DC 14*: Soft sobbing sounds emanate from within the tree itself

Mordecai's Transformation

Initial Encounter: Mordecai stands before the great oak, but he is no longer entirely human. His skin has taken on a gray pallor, his eyes are solid black, and black feathers grow from his arms and neck. Crows perch on his shoulders and whisper constantly in his ears. When he speaks, his voice carries the harmonics of a thousand corvid calls.

Mordecai Blackfeather (Modified Druid)

- AC 16 (Natural Armor), HP 58, Speed 30 ft., Fly 60 ft. (corvid form)
- **Appearance:** Once-human druid transformed by communion with death itself. Black feathers sprout from skin, eyes are solid obsidian, speaks with multiple voices.
- **Manner:** Eerily calm, speaks as if from great distance. Believes he has achieved enlightenment.

Initial Dialogue: *"So, the living come to disturb the parliament of the dead. Do you not hear their wisdom? Do you not understand the gift I have given them—to speak again, to share their knowledge with those who yet draw breath?"*

Common Questions & Responses:

Q: "What have you done to the village?" A: "I have torn aside the veil that separates truth from ignorance. The dead know all—every secret, every hidden shame, every moment of joy lost to time. Through my corvid congregation, they speak these truths to the living."

Q: "Why are people going mad?" A: "The mind of the living is too small to contain the wisdom of the dead. Some break under the weight of truth, yes. But is madness not preferable to ignorance?"

Q: "How do we stop this curse?" A: (Laughs, the sound like a murder of crows taking flight) "Curse? You call enlightenment a curse? I have bridged life and death, given voice to the voiceless! I am become the herald of eternity!"

Q: "What happened to your sister?" A: (Voice becomes multitonal, speaking with different inflections) "Helena speaks through me now. She forgives the fever that took her. She understands why I could not save her. She... she told me how to let all the dead speak again."

Mordecai's Tragic Backstory: Through dialogue or investigation, the party learns that Mordecai's transformation began with grief. His sister Helena died of fever the previous year, and his inability to save her despite his druidic powers drove him to seek ways to communicate with the dead. His research led him to dark rituals that promised reunion with the deceased, but the price was his humanity and the sanity of all who heard the dead speak through his corvid intermediaries.

Chapter 4: The Ritual and the Tree

Understanding the Curse

The True Nature of the Corruption: Mordecai's ritual has not simply allowed the dead to speak—it has torn a permanent rift between the material plane and the shadowfell. The ancient oak serves as an anchor point, with its roots extending into the realm of the dead. The crows act as living conduits, their voices carrying messages from spirits who should be at rest.

The Growing Threat: Each day the ritual continues, the rift grows wider. Soon, the dead will not merely speak through corvids—they will be able to manifest physically. The curse will spread beyond Ravenshollow, eventually encompassing the entire region in an eternal parliament of the dead.

Research Opportunities:

- **Arcana DC 18:** The ritual can be reversed, but doing so requires either Mordecai's willing cooperation or his death
- **Religion DC 16:** The tree itself has become unholy ground, corrupted by its connection to death
- **Nature DC 20:** Destroying the tree would seal the rift but would also release all the trapped spiritual energy at once

The Corvid Parliament

Encounter Description: When the party approaches Mordecai directly, the thousands of crows in the trees suddenly take flight, forming a massive spiral above the clearing. They speak in unison, their collective voice booming across the forest:

"THE LIVING TRESPASS IN THE REALM OF TRUTH! THE DEAD HAVE SPOKEN—YOU MUST JOIN THE ETERNAL PARLIAMENT OR BE SILENCED FOREVER!"

Combat Statistics:

- **Swarm of Ravens** (use Swarm of Ravens stat block, but increase HP to 48 and add the following ability):
- **Voices of the Dead:** As a bonus action, the swarm can force all creatures within 60 feet to make a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw. Those who fail are frightened for 1 minute and hear the voices of their deceased loved ones begging them to join the swarm.

Tactical Considerations:

- The swarm attempts to separate party members, focusing on isolating the most vulnerable
- Every round, random crows break off to speak disturbing truths about the characters' pasts
- Mordecai does not initially engage directly, preferring to let his corvid servants handle the intruders
- If reduced to half HP, the swarm retreats to regroup, giving the party a chance to approach Mordecai

Chapter 5: Multiple Resolution Paths

Path 1: Redemption Through Understanding

Requirements: Party successfully communicates with Mordecai, shows empathy for his loss, and helps him understand the harm he's causing.

Key Dialogue Options:

- *"Helena wouldn't want this suffering for others."*
- *"Your grief is real, but this isn't healing—it's spreading the pain."*
- *"The dead deserve rest, not eternal servitude."*

Persuasion Challenges:

- DC 16 Persuasion to make Mordecai question his actions
- DC 18 Insight to understand what Helena truly meant to him
- DC 20 Persuasion to convince him to end the ritual voluntarily

Resolution: Mordecai realizes the horror of what he's done and works with the party to reverse the ritual. This requires a complex ceremony involving destroying the ritual circles, severing the tree's connection to the shadowfell, and releasing the trapped spirits. Mordecai survives but loses his druidic powers, becoming a normal human consumed by guilt but grateful for redemption.

Rewards: 600 gp each, the village's eternal gratitude, Mordecai becomes an ally who aids future supernatural investigations.

Path 2: Violent Confrontation

Requirements: Party attacks Mordecai directly or fails to convince him to stop the ritual.

Mordecai in Combat:

- Uses modified **Archdruid** stat block with the following changes:
- Replace beast shape with **Corvid Swarm Form**: Can transform into a swarm of ravens for 10 minutes

- Add **Death's Whisper**: Can cast *Speak with Dead* at will
- **Corvid Communion**: Can summon 1d4 **Swarms of Ravens** as an action (once per day)

Combat Encounter:

- **Phase 1**: Mordecai fights alongside 2 Swarms of Ravens
- **Phase 2**: When reduced to half HP, he transforms into corvid swarm form
- **Phase 3**: At 25% HP, he merges temporarily with the tree, gaining resistance to all damage but becoming immobilized

Resolution: Mordecai's death breaks the ritual immediately but catastrophically. The sudden severing of the connection causes a spiritual explosion that damages everyone in the clearing (4d6 necrotic damage, DC 18 Constitution save for half). The tree withers and dies, sealing the rift but leaving the village traumatized by the abrupt silence after weeks of corvid voices.

Rewards: 500 gp each, the village is saved but some villagers never fully recover their sanity.

Path 3: The Ritual Backfires

Requirements: Party attempts to manipulate the ritual without fully understanding it, or Mordecai loses control during the encounter.

What Goes Wrong: The tree's connection to the shadowfell becomes unstable, causing spirits to manifest physically in the material plane. The corvids become uncontrollable, spreading the curse rapidly beyond the village borders.

Immediate Consequences:

- 2d4 **Specters** manifest from the tree
- All corvids within 5 miles gain the ability to cast *fear* once per day
- The curse begins spreading to neighboring settlements

Emergency Resolution: The party must work quickly to contain the damage while fighting off manifestations of the dead. This requires either destroying the tree with massive damage (100 HP, AC 15, resistance to non-magical damage) or successfully casting *dispel magic* at 9th level on the ritual circles.

Long-term Consequences: Sets up future adventures dealing with the expanding curse, but provides minimal immediate rewards beyond survival.

Chapter 6: Detailed Location Descriptions

The Blackfeather Family Home

Exterior: A two-story cottage at the village's edge, distinguished by intricate carvings of ravens and natural motifs covering every surface. The garden, once meticulously maintained, now

grows wild with thorned vines and night-blooming flowers. A wooden sign bears the family motto: "Death Is But Another Door."

Interior - Ground Floor: The main room serves as both library and workshop for druidic practices. Shelves line every wall, filled with treatises on natural magic, herbalism, and increasingly dark tomes on necromancy. A large table bears the tools of Mordecai's research: preserved specimens, arcane implements, and maps marking ley lines throughout the region.

Investigation Results:

- *Investigation DC 12:* Mordecai's research progression is clear—from healing herbs to communicating with nature spirits to speaking with the dead
- *Investigation DC 16:* Hidden compartment contains letters from Helena, expressing concern about her brother's obsession with death
- *Arcana DC 18:* The final ritual notes detail the process of creating permanent conduits between planes using living creatures as anchors

Interior - Helena's Room (Unchanged Since Her Death): Mordecai has preserved his sister's room exactly as it was the day she died. Fresh flowers (now wilted) sit in vases, her clothes remain laid out for a day that will never come, and her journal lies open to her final entry.

Helena's Final Journal Entry: *"The fever grows worse. Mordecai tries so hard to heal me, but I fear this illness runs deeper than his herbs can reach. I worry what he might do if... if I cannot recover. He speaks of 'other methods,' of 'calling upon forces beyond nature.' I pray he will let me go in peace when my time comes."*

The Village Cemetery

Description: A modest graveyard on a hill overlooking Ravenshollow, surrounded by iron fencing topped with wrought-iron ravens. Ancient headstones lean at odd angles, their inscriptions worn smooth by time and weather. Newer graves show signs of disturbance—not exhumation, but as if something has been trying to dig its way out from within.

Supernatural Activity: Since Mordecai's ritual began, the cemetery has become a focal point for spiritual energy. Visitors report:

- Whispers rising from the graves at twilight
- Cold spots that form the shapes of human figures
- Fresh flowers appearing on graves with no living relatives to tend them
- Corvids perching on headstones and reciting the buried person's final words

Key Graves:

- **Helena Blackfeather:** The newest grave, tended obsessively. The headstone reads: "Beloved Sister, Gone Too Soon, But Never Truly Lost"

- **The Blackfeather Family Plot:** Seven generations of druids, their graves marked with Celtic knots and natural symbols
- **Unknown Graves:** Several old markers bear no names, only the symbol of a raven. These predate the village and hint at the site's ancient significance

The Corvid Roosts

Description: Throughout the village and surrounding forest, massive communal roosts have formed where hundreds of crows gather. These locations pulse with supernatural energy and serve as relay points for the voices of the dead.

Primary Roost - The Old Mill: An abandoned windmill on the village outskirts has become the largest corvid gathering point. The interior is carpeted with black feathers, and the walls bear scratch marks forming incomprehensible patterns.

Investigation Results:

- *Animal Handling DC 15:* The crows here are organized beyond normal corvid behavior, following complex hierarchies
- *Arcana DC 17:* The scratch patterns channel spiritual energy, amplifying the connection between planes
- *Perception DC 20:* Soft voices can be heard even when no crows are speaking—the building itself has become a conduit

Chapter 7: Extended NPC Interactions

Advanced Dialogue Trees

Margaret Thorne - Deeper Conversations:

If party gains her trust (multiple positive interactions): "My grandmother used to tell stories about the old druids. Said they could speak with the dead, but only on certain nights and only with great care. What Mordecai's done... it's broken every rule they followed."

If asked about the visiting scholars: "Strange folk, city types with too much gold and too many questions. They wanted to know about 'death magic' and 'planar boundaries.' Should have known they were up to no good, but times are hard and their coin was real."

If party mentions trying to help Mordecai: "Help him? Child, he's past helping. You want to know what happened to those who tried to reason with him? Ask the crows—they'll tell you in their victims' own voices."

Dr. Ravenscroft - Scientific Perspective:

When shown evidence of supernatural activity: "My medical training tells me this is impossible, yet I cannot deny what I observe. Perhaps the boundary between life and death is not as absolute as we believed. Perhaps consciousness persists in ways we haven't yet measured."

If asked about treating the affected villagers: "How does one cure madness caused by impossible truth? Mrs. Ashford spoke of things no living person could know. Young Fletcher described his own death in perfect detail—a death that came to pass exactly as the crows predicted."

When discussing possible solutions: "If this is indeed supernatural, then supernatural solutions may be required. I have some knowledge of exorcism procedures, learned from my predecessor who dealt with... unusual cases."

New NPCs - The Survivors

Simon Blackthorn (Commoner - Village Blacksmith)

- AC 12, HP 11, Speed 30 ft.
- **Appearance:** Burly man in his forties, arms scarred from forge work. Right eye clouded white from an old injury.
- **Manner:** Gruff but fundamentally decent. One of the few villagers still functioning normally.

Why He's Immune: His childhood injury damaged his hearing in specific frequencies, making him unable to hear the corvids' supernatural speech clearly.

"Lucky me, eh? Thirty years I've cursed this damaged ear, and now it's the only thing keeping me sane. I hear the crows talking, but it's like listening through water—can't make out the words that drive others mad."

Information Simon Provides:

- Details about the village's layout and hidden passages
- Practical knowledge about the Blackfeather family's habits and resources
- Offers to forge silver weapons if the party brings materials

Young Emma Winters (Commoner - Survivor)

- AC 10, HP 4, Speed 30 ft.
- **Appearance:** Girl of perhaps sixteen, hollow-eyed and prematurely aged by horror. Clutches a wooden doll.
- **Manner:** Speaks in whispers, frequently addresses her doll as if it were alive.

Emma's Unique Perspective: As one of the youngest survivors, she perceives the supernatural differently than adults.

"The crows aren't bad, not really. They're just very, very sad. They carry all the sadness of the dead people, and it's too heavy. That's why they have to share it with everyone else."

Information Emma Provides:

- Childlike but accurate observations about the curse's progression
- Knows secret paths through the village that adults have forgotten
- Her doll sometimes "tells" her things that prove to be true (GM's tool for providing hints)

Chapter 8: Enhanced Horror Elements

Psychological Horror Techniques

The Creeping Dread: The adventure should build tension gradually through small, unsettling details:

- Crows that watch too intently, turning their heads in perfect unison
- Conversations that stop abruptly when the party approaches
- Shadows that don't match their sources
- The gradual realization that the crows remember everything they've observed

Personal Horror: The curse should feel personal to each character:

- Crows speak in voices of people from the characters' pasts
- Dead relatives or friends communicate through corvid intermediaries
- The party's own secrets are revealed through corvid whispers
- Characters begin to question whether their own thoughts are private

Escalating Supernatural Events:

Day 1 in Ravenshollow:

- Crows watch silently
- Occasional whispered words in familiar voices
- Cold spots and unexplained sounds

Day 2:

- Crows begin speaking directly to party members
- Spectral figures glimpsed in peripheral vision
- Dead loved ones' voices calling from empty houses

Day 3:

- Full conversations with the deceased through corvid intermediaries
- Physical manifestations of spiritual energy

- Party members begin hearing voices even when no crows are present

If the party delays beyond Day 3:

- Risk of permanent psychological damage (Wisdom score reduction)
- Spectral manifestations become physical threats
- The curse begins spreading to nearby settlements

Sanity Mechanics (Optional Rule)

For groups that enjoy psychological horror, implement a Sanity score:

Starting Sanity: 10 + Wisdom modifier

Sanity Loss Events:

- Hearing personal secrets revealed by crows: -1 Sanity
- Conversing with deceased loved ones: -1d4 Sanity
- Witnessing spectral manifestations: -1d6 Sanity
- Entering the corrupted druid circle: -2d4 Sanity

Sanity Recovery:

- Long rest in blessed ground: +1 Sanity
- Successfully helping a villager: +1 Sanity
- Destroying a corvid roost: +1d4 Sanity

Sanity Effects:

- 0-2 Sanity: Frequent hallucinations, disadvantage on Wisdom checks
- 3-5 Sanity: Paranoid behavior, difficulty distinguishing reality
- 6-8 Sanity: Mild anxiety, occasional false perceptions
- 9+ Sanity: No mechanical effects

Chapter 9: Combat Encounters and Stat Blocks

Corrupted Corvids

Whispering Crow (CR 1/8)

- AC 12, HP 1, Speed 10 ft., fly 50 ft.
- **Abilities:** STR 2 (-4), DEX 14 (+2), CON 8 (-1), INT 6 (-2), WIS 12 (+1), CHA 8 (-1)
- **Special: Voice of the Dead** - Can speak in any voice it has heard from a deceased creature
- **Maddening Whisper:** As a bonus action, target within 30 feet must make DC 12 Wisdom save or take 1d4 psychic damage

Corvid Prophet (CR 2)

- AC 14, HP 22, Speed 15 ft., fly 60 ft.
- **Abilities:** STR 6 (-2), DEX 18 (+4), CON 12 (+1), INT 10 (+0), WIS 16 (+3), CHA 14 (+2)
- **Special: Deathsight** - Can see and communicate with spirits within 60 feet
- **Prophetic Caw:** Once per day, can cast *augury* without components
- **Reveal Secret:** Forces target to make DC 15 Charisma save or have an embarrassing secret announced to all within hearing

The Murder Incarnate (CR 6) - Boss Encounter

- AC 16, HP 90, Speed 20 ft., fly 80 ft.
- **Abilities:** STR 14 (+2), DEX 22 (+6), CON 16 (+3), INT 12 (+1), WIS 18 (+4), CHA 16 (+3)
- **Legendary Actions:** 3 per turn
- **Swarm Form:** Can occupy same space as other creatures, deals 2d6 piercing damage to any creature sharing its space
- **Chorus of the Dead:** All creatures within 60 feet hear voices of their deceased loved ones, must make DC 17 Wisdom save or be stunned for 1 round
- **Legendary Actions:** Move without provoking opportunity attacks, make a beak attack, or use Maddening Whisper

Spectral Manifestations

Tormented Shade (CR 3)

- Use **Specter** stat block with following modifications:
- **Stolen Voice:** Can speak only through nearby corvids
- **Unfinished Business:** Gains advantage on attacks against creatures who knew them in life
- **Fade Away:** When reduced to 0 HP, disappears but reforms in 24 hours unless put to proper rest

Helena's Echo (CR 4) - Special Encounter

- AC 12, HP 32, Speed 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)
- **Abilities:** STR 1 (-5), DEX 14 (+2), CON 10 (+0), INT 16 (+3), WIS 18 (+4), CHA 20 (+5)
- **Damage Resistances:** Acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, slashing from nonmagical attacks
- **Damage Immunities:** Necrotic, poison
- **Sister's Plea:** Can attempt to persuade Mordecai to end the ritual (gives party advantage on Persuasion checks)
- **Peaceful Presence:** Radiates calm, granting advantage on saves against fear within 30 feet

Environmental Hazards

Corrupted Ground (Around the Great Oak)

- Difficult terrain due to writhing roots
- DC 15 Constitution save each round or take 1d6 necrotic damage
- Spells that heal or harm undead have their effects doubled

Spiritual Winds (Throughout Thornwood)

- Random gusts carry voices of the dead
- DC 16 Wisdom save or become distracted (disadvantage on Perception checks for 10 minutes)
- Can provide useful information but at the cost of mental stability

Corvid Swarms (Village-wide)

- Not directly hostile but create constant surveillance
- Any loud noise or obvious magic use attracts 2d6 additional corvids
- Swarms can report party movements to Mordecai

Chapter 10: Expanded Resolution Options

Path 4: The Scholarly Approach

Requirements: Party researches the curse thoroughly, gathering information from multiple sources and understanding the ritual's true nature.

Research Opportunities:

- Father Crane's theological texts on life/death boundaries
- Dr. Ravenscroft's scientific observations and measurements
- The Blackfeather family's ancestral grimoires
- Interviews with long-term villagers about pre-curse supernatural activity

Key Insights Needed:

1. The ritual creates a permanent breach, not temporary communication
2. Mordecai is no longer fully in control of what he summoned
3. The ancient oak predates human settlement and has natural planar connections
4. Previous Blackfeather druids used careful, limited rituals with proper safeguards

Scholarly Solution: Instead of destroying or reversing the ritual, the party learns to properly contain and regulate it. This involves:

- Recreating the traditional Blackfeather protective circles

- Teaching Mordecai the proper limitations his ancestors observed
- Establishing a sustainable system where communication with the dead occurs only at specific times and places

Outcome: The curse is transformed into a controlled blessing. Ravenshollow becomes a pilgrimage site where people can occasionally communicate with deceased loved ones under careful supervision. Mordecai retains his powers but learns wisdom and restraint.

Path 5: The Sacrifice

Requirements: One party member voluntarily takes Mordecai's place as the anchor point for the ritual.

How This Develops: Through investigation, the party learns that someone must maintain the connection to prevent catastrophic spiritual backlash. If Mordecai dies or abandons his role without a replacement, the accumulated spiritual energy will explode outward, spreading the curse across the entire region.

Volunteer Considerations:

- Character must have strong connection to the dead (personal loss, necromancy magic, etc.)
- Requires willing sacrifice (cannot be coerced)
- Character gains supernatural abilities but loses some humanity
- Other party members must convince the volunteer this is necessary

Ritual Requirements:

- Takes place at dawn during the new moon
- Requires personal items from both the volunteer and Mordecai
- Helena's spirit must consent to transfer her connection to the new anchor
- All party members must contribute blood to seal the pact

Outcome: The sacrificing character becomes the new guardian of the boundary between life and death. They gain supernatural abilities but are bound to the Thornwood. The curse ends, but the party loses a member to an eternal vigil.

Path 6: Divine Intervention

Requirements: Party seeks aid from higher powers through religious channels.

Available Options:

- Convince Father Crane to perform a mass exorcism ritual
- Seek aid from St. Corvina herself through prayer and offerings
- Contact druids from other circles who might know proper banishment techniques

- Appeal to death deities for direct intervention

Divine Exorcism Process:

1. **Preparation Phase:** Gather holy water, silver, blessed salt, and sacred texts
2. **Purification Phase:** Cleanse the village of spiritual contamination
3. **Confrontation Phase:** Challenge the corrupted spirits directly
4. **Banishment Phase:** Send the dead back to their proper rest

Complications:

- Requires faith from party members (Religion checks throughout)
- Mordecai and the corvids will actively resist divine intervention
- Some villagers may have grown attached to communicating with dead relatives
- Divine aid comes with obligations and future service requirements

Outcome: The curse is completely lifted through divine power, but the party owes significant service to the religious authorities who aided them. Future adventures may involve completing divine quests or protecting religious sites.

Chapter 11: Aftermath and Long-term Consequences

Village Recovery Phases

Immediate Aftermath (First Week):

- Surviving villagers emerge from hiding, many suffering from psychological trauma
- Cleanup of corvid roosts and supernatural contamination
- Funeral rites for those who died during the curse
- Re-establishment of basic village functions

Short-term Recovery (First Month):

- Mental health support for traumatized villagers
- Rebuilding damaged buildings and infrastructure
- Deciding the fate of the Blackfeather estate and family legacy
- Determining whether to publicize or hide the supernatural events

Long-term Implications (Months to Years):

- Village's reputation attracts supernatural investigators and curiosity seekers
- Economic impact from temporary population loss and property damage
- Potential for residual supernatural activity
- Changes in local religious practices and beliefs

Character Development Opportunities

Personal Growth Arcs: Each resolution path offers different character development opportunities:

Redemption Path: Characters learn about forgiveness, the power of empathy, and helping others heal from trauma.

Combat Path: Characters face the consequences of violence as a first resort and learn about the price of decisive action.

Scholarly Path: Characters discover the value of knowledge, patience, and understanding complex problems before acting.

Sacrifice Path: Characters explore themes of duty, sacrifice, and what they're willing to give up for others.

Divine Path: Characters develop or strengthen religious connections and understand the role of faith in confronting evil.

Ongoing Plot Hooks

The Visiting Scholars: Who were the mysterious scholars who questioned villagers before the curse began? Their involvement suggests a larger conspiracy involving supernatural research.

Other Blackfeather Sites: The family protected other locations throughout the region. Have similar curses manifested elsewhere?

The Corvid Network: Even after resolution, some enhanced corvids remain. They could serve as an information network or harbinger of future supernatural threats.

Mordecai's Fate: Depending on the resolution, Mordecai might become a valuable ally, a continuing threat, or a tragic figure requiring ongoing support.

Chapter 12: Handouts and Props

Handout 1: Helena's Letter to Mordecai

"My Dearest Brother, I write this knowing my time grows short. The fever that consumes me cannot be cured by herb or prayer, and I have made my peace with this truth. But I fear what you have not made peace with—your determination to fight death itself. Please, when I am gone, let me rest. Do not seek to call me back, do not attempt to bridge the gap between life and death for my sake. Some doors, once opened, can never be closed. Your loving sister, Helena."

Handout 2: Dr. Ravenscroft's Medical Notes

"Patient exhibits symptoms consistent with acute psychological break: auditory hallucinations, paranoid delusions, complete withdrawal from social contact. However, the specificity of the

'hallucinated' information suggests external source rather than internal psychological creation. Patient knows details about deceased individuals that should be impossible to obtain through normal means. Preliminary hypothesis: mass shared delusion with unknown triggering mechanism."

Handout 3: Father Crane's Theological Research

"The boundary between life and death has always been permeable under specific circumstances. Biblical accounts of communication with the dead typically involve divine intermediation or prophetic gift. However, the current phenomenon exhibits characteristics more consistent with necromantic breach than divine revelation. The dead speak, but their words bring madness rather than comfort—a clear sign of corruption in the spiritual channel."

Handout 4: Mordecai's Ritual Notes

"The seventh night approaches. The corvids have accepted their role as vessels, and the oak responds to my call. Helena's voice grows stronger with each passing hour. She tells me of the others—thousands of spirits eager to speak again. I understand now that this is not merely about my sister. I am to become the herald of all the dead, giving voice to the voiceless throughout eternity. The living may not understand at first, but they will learn to appreciate the wisdom of those who have crossed over."

Handout 5: Village Historical Record

"The Blackfeather family has served as Ravenshollow's protectors for seven generations. Each family head has maintained the sacred grove and performed the seasonal rituals that keep our village safe from supernatural threats. The family motto, 'Death Is But Another Door,' reflects their unique understanding of the boundary between life and death. Local legend holds that in times of great need, a Blackfeather can speak with the village's honored dead for guidance—but such communication must be approached with utmost caution and respect."

Appendix A: Quick Reference Tables

Random Corvid Behaviors (Roll d12)

1. Single crow lands near party, tilts head, speaks one word in familiar voice, flies away
2. Murder of crows forms overhead, caws in rhythm that sounds like heartbeat
3. Crows arrange themselves to spell words when viewed from above
4. Individual crow follows party for hours, never making sound
5. Crows suddenly fall silent when party approaches, resume talking when they leave
6. Large crow speaks entire conversation between two dead people
7. Crows begin imitating party members' voices from earlier conversations
8. Murder performs synchronized flight pattern that resembles ritual symbols
9. Single crow brings small object belonging to dead villager
10. Crows start speaking simultaneously in different languages
11. Elderly crow speaks prophecy about party member's future

12. All crows turn to stare at party member who has lost someone recently

Village Locations Quick Reference

- **St. Corvina's Chapel:** Safe haven, Father Crane, religious resources
- **The Crooked Crow Inn:** Shelter, Margaret Thorne, village gossip
- **Dr. Ravenscroft's Practice:** Medical supplies, scientific perspective
- **Fletcher Home:** Crime scene, evidence of corvid activity
- **Ashford Estate:** Madness evidence, secret writings
- **Village Cemetery:** Spiritual activity, family histories
- **The Old Mill:** Primary corvid roost, supernatural energy focus
- **Blackfeather Home:** Research materials, Helena's preserved room

NPC Attitude Tracker

Father Crane: Helpful but overwhelmed → Grateful for competent aid → Potential religious ally
Margaret Thorne: Suspicious → Cautiously cooperative → Fiercely loyal
Dr. Ravenscroft: Clinical detachment → Desperate for answers → Valuable research partner
Mordecai: Fanatical certainty → Questioning doubt → Potential redemption or final confrontation

Appendix B: Scaling Options

For Level 3-4 Parties

- Replace Corvid Prophet with enhanced Whispering Crows
- Reduce Mordecai to **Druid** stat block instead of Archdruid
- Limit spectral manifestations to single Tormented Shade
- Reduce curse's psychological effects (lower DCs, less damage)

For Level 6-8 Parties

- Add second Murder Incarnate encounter
- Upgrade Mordecai to custom stat block with legendary actions
- Include multiple spectral manifestations simultaneously
- Add corrupted treants in the Thornwood
- Increase curse spread rate, requiring faster resolution

For Experienced Horror Players

- Implement full Sanity mechanics
- Add more personal horror elements targeting character backgrounds
- Include moral ambiguity—some dead provide genuinely helpful information
- Create time pressure through escalating village madness
- Add multiple red herrings and false solutions

Adventure Credits

- **Design:** Gothic horror adventure inspired by classic psychological terror
- **Estimated Play Time:** 6-8 hours
- **Recommended Party Size:** 4-6 characters
- **Level Range:** 5-7 (scalable)

DM's Notes: This adventure emphasizes atmosphere and psychological horror over combat. Encourage players to engage with the mystery and roleplay their characters' growing unease. The true horror comes from the impossible knowledge the crows possess and the gradual realization that death may not be the end of consciousness. Adjust the horror elements based on your group's comfort level, and remember that the goal is tension and atmosphere, not genuine distress.