

PATHS OF SHADOW AND SERVICE

A CHARACTER CREATION STORY FOR THE 2026 QUEST CALENDAR: SOULS OF SAKU



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Special Thanks to Garnet Lamb for her valued contributions.

The Overlord has graciously let you join his hoard, and this is your first day in service. It's time to prove yourself so you can rise through the ranks and impress the Overlord.

Within these pages is a story to help guide you to create a Level 1 character for the 2026 Quest Calendar: Souls of Saraku. Use the full rules for character creation for advanced customization and to level up your character beyond level 1.

Venture on and start your new life as a Force of Darkness!

SCENE 1: A LOOK IN THE MIRROR

Dusk has fallen at the Dark Citadel. It is time to begin your evening duties.

You rise from your bed to the sound of the tolling of bells and begin to dress quickly. Tardiness is not tolerated within the Overlord's lair. Gazing about the room, you see yourself in a dingy, warped mirror. Though it is hard to make out your face in the low torchlight...

YOU APPEAR TO BE A...

Species within Saraku vary greatly. Pick the one that speaks the most to you.

Your decision will set your starting traits: Strength (Str), Dexterity (Dex), Constitution (Con), Wisdom (Wis), Intellect (Int), and Charisma (Cha). These determine the strengths and weaknesses of your villain's skills and how they interact with the world around them. They will be adjusted as you progress through this story.

A) HUMAN

Consistent and adaptable, humans are the most abundant race in the realm.

Starting Traits:

STR: +0	INT: +0
DEX: +0	WIS: +0
CON: +0	CHA: +0

E) ELF

Graceful and long lived, Elves move with quiet confidence and see what others overlook.

Starting Traits:

STR: +0	INT: -1
DEX: +1	WIS: +0
CON: -1	CHA: +1

B) ORC

Orcs are strong and brutal and never back down from a fight.

Starting Traits:

STR: +2	INT: -1
DEX: +0	WIS: -1
CON: +1	CHA: -1

F) DWARF

Stubborn and unyielding, Dwarves are built like stone and just as difficult to break.

Starting Traits:

STR: +1	INT: -1
DEX: +0	WIS: -1
CON: +2	CHA: -1

C) GOBLIN

Though small and weak, Goblins make up for their small stature with speed and stealth.

Starting Traits:

STR: -1	INT: -1
DEX: +2	WIS: +0
CON: +2	CHA: -2

G) GNOME

Clever and curious, Gnomes rely on wit and ingenuity to outthink larger foes.

Starting Traits:

STR: -1	INT: +1
DEX: +1	WIS: +0
CON: +2	CHA: -1

D) RATLING

Opportunistic and agile, Ratlings live on the outskirts of society, scavenging from others to survive.

Starting Traits:

STR: -1	INT: +1
DEX: +1	WIS: -1
CON: +2	CHA: -2

H) TROLL

Regenerating and savage, Trolls shrug off wounds that would fell lesser beings.

Starting Traits:

STR: +2	INT: -1
DEX: +0	WIS: -1
CON: +2	CHA: -2

I) OGRE

Massive and terrifying, Ogres solve most problems with overwhelming force.

Starting Traits:

STR: +2 INT: -1
DEX: +1 WIS: -1
CON: +1 CHA: -2

K) LIZARDFOLK

Cold and calculating, Lizardfolk view the world through instinct, survival, and efficiency.

Starting Traits:

STR: +0 INT: -1
DEX: +1 WIS: -1
CON: +1 CHA: +0

J) DRAGONBORN

Proud and fearsome, Dragonborn carry the strength and fury of dragons in their blood.

Starting Traits:

STR: +1 INT: -1
DEX: +1 WIS: -1
CON: +1 CHA: -1

L) HELLBORN (TIEFLING)

Marked by infernal blood, Hellborn command fear, charm, and an unsettling presence.

Starting Traits:

STR: -1 INT: +0
DEX: +0 WIS: -1
CON: +1 CHA: +1

The form is a character sheet template with a decorative, gothic-style border. It includes the following sections:

- Name:** A line for the character's name.
- Class:** A line for the character's class, with a purple circle containing the number 1 next to it.
- Level:** A line for the character's level.
- Traits:** A vertical column of seven icons representing different traits, each with a purple circle containing a number from 2 to 7 next to it. The icons are: a sword (Strength), a hammer (Dexterity), a bell (Constitution), a gear (Intellect), a book (Wisdom), a heart (Charisma), and a skull (Damage).
- Stats:** A section with four icons: a heart (HP), a star (Max), a skull (Atk), and a skull (Dmg).
- Notoriety:** A horizontal bar with a scale from 0 to 20.
- Minions:** A horizontal bar with a scale from 0 to 20.
- Gold:** A line for the character's gold.
- Equipment, Loot, and Notes:** A large rectangular area with horizontal lines for notes.
- Abilities:** A vertical column of ten icons representing different abilities, each with a purple circle containing a number from 1 to 10 next to it.
- Bonus:** A line for the character's bonus.
- Penalty:** A line for the character's penalty.

1. Note down your Species.
2. Note down your starting Strength.
3. Note down your starting Dexterity.
4. Note down your starting Constitution.
5. Note down your starting Intellect.
6. Note down your starting Wisdom.
7. Note down your starting Charisma.

Scene 2: A Personal Trinket

You are nearly ready to greet the evening and the chaos that awaits. But you cannot leave without your most prized possession, a trinket you have carried for years. It reminds you of where you came from and quietly guides you along your path. You reach for the table beside your bed and close your fingers around it.

AND YOU PICK UP A...

What skills, services, combat abilities, and techniques in dealing with the world does your villain have? Your villain's class is their profession, their calling, and even their upbringing. Choose an item that speaks to you. This will help you pick a class for your villain and refine your traits.

A) A VIAL OF BLOOD

You are a Blooddrinker. Sustained by stolen life, a Blooddrinker grows stronger with every wound they inflict.

Trait Adjustments:

Constitution: -1
Charisma: +1

B) AN OLD, NICKED BLADE

You are a Battlemaster. Hardened by countless skirmishes, a Battlemaster thrives amid steel, blood, and disciplined violence.

Trait Adjustments:

Strength: +1
Dexterity: -1

C) A CRACKED SKULL CHARM

You are a Deathweaver. A master of endings, the Deathweaver bends fate and decay to their will.

Trait Adjustments:

Strength: -1
Intellect: +1

D) A RUSTED SICKLE

You are a Filthreaper. Born of rot and ruin, the Filthreaper spreads corruption wherever they tread.

Trait Adjustments:

Dexterity: +1
Wisdom: -1

E) A SEALED PHIAL OF BLACK GOO

You are a Plaguebringer. Patient and relentless, the Plaguebringer turns sickness into a weapon of conquest.

Trait Adjustments:

Constitution: +1
Charisma: -1

F) A BLACKENED TALISMAN

You are a Covenborn. Raised in whispered rituals, the Covenborn channels forbidden magic through blood and oath.

Trait Adjustments:

Intellect: -1
Wisdom: +1

G) A THORN WRAPPED SIGIL

You are a Hexbinder. Curses cling to you, shaping fate through whispered malice and binding magic.

Trait Adjustments:

Constitution: -1
Intellect: +1

H) A BONE-CARVED WARD STONE

You are a Gravewarden. You stand watch over the dead, drawing strength from graves and forgotten places.

Trait Adjustments:

Wisdom: +1
Charisma: -1

I) A BLOOD-STAINED CHAIN

You are Bloodbound. Power flows through bonds of sacrifice, binding your fate to blood and oath.

Trait Adjustments:

Dexterity: -1
Constitution: +1

J) A STITCHED FLESH CHARM

You are a Fleshcrafter. You reshape living and dead matter alike, crafting strength from suffering.

Trait Adjustments:

Strength: -1
Constitution: +1

K) A FRACTURED VOID CRYSTAL

You are a Voidcaller. You draw power from nothingness itself, bending reality through absence and silence.

Trait Adjustments:

Dexterity: -1
Wisdom: +1

L) A BLACKENED KNIGHT'S CREST

You are a Dreadknight. Fear marches at your side as you crush foes beneath relentless force.

Trait Adjustments:

Strength: +1
Intellect: -1

M) A TOLLING BELL

You are a Grim Herald. You announce death's arrival, weakening foes before the final blow is struck.

Trait Adjustments:

Intellect: +1
Wisdom: -1

O) A NECKLACE OF FINGER BONES

You are a Bonecaller. Skeletons and spirits rise at your command, bound by ancient rites.

Trait Adjustments:

Dexterity: +1
Constitution: -1

P) A CLOUDED GLASS EYE

You are a Seer. You glimpse truths others cannot, guided by visions both damning and divine.

Trait Adjustments:

Wisdom: -1
Charisma: +1

The form is a character builder template with a purple border. At the top, it has a line for 'Name' and a 'Class' field with a purple circle containing the number '1'. Below this is a 'Traits' section with a vertical list of six circular icons representing different traits: Strength (Str), Dexterity (Dex), Constitution (Con), Intelligence (Int), Wisdom (Wis), and Charisma (Cha). A purple circle containing the number '2' is placed next to the Constitution icon.

1. Note down your Class.
2. Adjust your starting Traits.

SCENE 3: YOUR WEAPON, YOUR TOOL

You exit your room and step into a vast stone hallway. The corridor stretches toward the main staircase, torchlight flickering against cold walls. As you pass, an open doorway reveals a small armory, packed tight with weapons and supplies. Each floor has one, ready to arm the inhabitants of the Dark Citadel should any enemy be foolish enough to attempt a siege. A weapons rack waits within. Your eyes settle on the one made for you.

YOU ARM YOURSELF WITH A...

Choose a weapon suited to your vision of the perfect villain. You don't need a staff or a wand to be a spellcaster. Here, the weapon you choose will determine your combat stats.

A) A LONGSWORD

Balanced and reliable, it has seen countless battles and will see many more.

Base Combat Stats:

Max Hp: 14	Attack: +2
Defense: +0	Damage: d10

B) A WAR AXE

Heavy and brutal, it tears through armor and bone with savage force.

Base Combat Stats:

Max Hp: 11	Attack: +2
Defense: +1	Damage: d10

C) SERRATED DAGGERS

Small and wicked, they strike fast and disappear just as quickly.

Base Combat Stats:

Max Hp: 16	Attack: +2
Defense: +1	Damage: d8

D) A WAND

Slender and precise, it shapes raw magic into controlled destruction.

Base Combat Stats:

Max Hp: 14	Attack: +0
Defense: +2	Damage: d10

E) A SPIKED MACE

Blunt and unforgiving, it crushes what it cannot cut.

Base Combat Stats:

Max Hp: 11	Attack: +1
Defense: +2	Damage: d10

F) A HOOKED SPEAR

Long and precise, it keeps enemies at bay while dragging them down.

Base Combat Stats:

Max Hp: 14	Attack: +1
Defense: +1	Damage: d10

G) A RECURVED BOW

Silent and deadly, it fells foes before they know they are hunted.

Base Combat Stats:

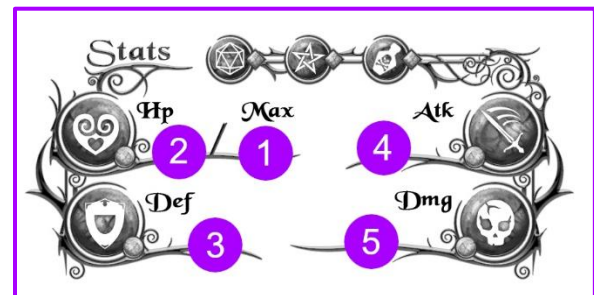
Max Hp: 13	Attack: +2
Defense: +2	Damage: d8

H) A CHAIN WHIP

Unpredictable and cruel, it entangles, bludgeons, and breaks control.

Base Combat Stats:

Max Hp: 16	Attack: +1
Defense: +2	Damage: d8



1. Note down your starting Max Hp.
2. Note down your Current HP (same as your Max HP).
3. Note down your starting Defense.
4. Note down your starting Attack.
5. Note down your starting Damage.

SCENE 4: WHAT'S COOKING?

You can't be evil on an empty stomach. You head for the kitchens in search of something to eat. Minions bustle about, serving an array of dishes meant to satisfy a wide range of species and questionable tastes. Sweat drips from their brows into the food under the relentless heat of the cooking fires, adding to the flavor, of course. You survey the fare laid out before you. What looks tasty?

YOU CHOOSE TO EAT...

Choose one that speaks to your character, a food choice they might eat even when you probably wouldn't. Here, it will help finalize your character's traits.

A) A BOWL OF GRAY GRUEL

Thick, warm, and barely identifiable, it fills the stomach and dulls the senses.

Trait Adjustments:

Constitution: +1
Wisdom: -1

B) A SKEWER OF ROASTED RAT

Charred on the outside and greasy within, it crackles as you bite into it.

Trait Adjustments:

Strength: +1
Wisdom: -1

C) A SLAB OF BLOOD PUDDING

Rich and metallic, it steams softly and leaves your lips stained dark.

Trait Adjustments:

Charisma: +1
Dexterity: -1

D) A QUIVERING CUBE OF GELATINOUS JELLY

Translucent and faintly glowing, it jiggles as if aware of your gaze.

Trait Adjustments:

Intellect: +1
Dexterity: -1

E) A PLATE OF ROTTED MEAT

Soft, pungent, and crawling with life, it is best eaten quickly.

Trait Adjustments:

Strength: +1
Constitution: -1

F) A BOWL OF BONE BROTH

Cloudy and thick, it tastes of marrow and long-simmered remains.

Trait Adjustments:

Wisdom: +1
Constitution: -1

G) A FISTFUL OF PICKLED EYEBALLS

Rubbery and sour, they burst with a salty snap between your teeth.

Trait Adjustments:

Intellect: +1
Charisma: -1

H) A WEDGE OF MOLD-VEINED CHEESE

Sharp and earthy, it burns the tongue before settling warmly in the gut.

Trait Adjustments:

Dexterity: +1
Charisma: -1

**I) A SIZZLING PAN OF INSECT
HASH**

Crunchy and oily, it smells far better than it looks.

Trait Adjustments:

Dexterity: +1

Intellect: -1

**J) A CUP OF BLACKENED
MUSHROOM STEW**

Bitter and narcotic, it leaves your thoughts pleasantly unfocused.

Trait Adjustments:

Charisma: +1

Strength: -1

SCENE 5: THAT PATH AHEAD

You finish your meal and move on. It is time to report to your superior, though the castle is vast and winding. You know your destination well enough, but the route is far from certain. Some paths wind through familiar halls, while others lead through lesser-known corners of the Dark Citadel. Each offers its own risks and opportunities. Many paths lie before you.

YOU CHOOSE TO...

Pick a compelling path your character might take within the castle to get where they are going. This decision will give you your character's first ability. Your villain's abilities are a list of the special powers, talents, and skills they can use to overcome obstacles and enemies in the world of Saraku.

A) MEANDER THROUGH THE GARDENS OF DEATH

Poisonous plants, shifting paths, and hostile growth reward those who know how to endure nature's worst.

Gain Ability:

Survivalist (O) Add +2 to all rolls to endure long journeys and traveling.

B) PASS THROUGH THE DUNGEONS

Prisoners, guards, and cruelty respond quickly to a strong presence and an implied threat.

Gain Ability:

Intimidating (O) Add +2 to all rolls to threaten and intimidate.

C) ASK A FELLOW MINION FOR DIRECTIONS

A friendly word or subtle pressure gets answers faster than wandering blind.

Gain Ability:

Persuasive (O) Add +2 to all rolls to persuade and convince.

D) CUT THROUGH THE SERVANT CORRIDORS

Narrow passages and hidden routes favor those who move quietly and avoid notice.

Gain Ability:

Stealthy (O) Add +2 to all rolls to sneak and remain hidden.

E) TAKE THE LONG ROUTE ALONG THE BATTLEMENTS

Climbing stairs, braving wind, and navigating exposed stone test physical endurance and balance.

Gain Ability:

Athlete (O) Add +2 to all rolls to overcome physical and athletic hurdles.

F) SLIP INTO A LOCKED SHORTCUT PASSAGE

Old service doors and forgotten routes reward those who can open what others cannot.

Gain Ability:

Locksmith (O) Add +2 to all rolls to bypass or open a lock.

G) INVESTIGATE A LESSER USED HALLWAY MARKED WITH WARNING SIGILS

Clues, markings, and subtle signs hint at danger or opportunity for those who pay attention.

Gain Ability:

Investigator (O) Add +2 to all rolls to search and investigate.

H) FOLLOW THE TORCHLIT MAIN HALLS

Familiar architecture, heraldry, and layout reward those who know the citadel's history and design.

Gain Ability:

Student (O) Add +2 to all rolls to recall history and knowledge.

I) NAVIGATE A PARTIALLY COLLAPSED STAIRWELL

Unstable stone and hidden hazards punish the careless and reward the cautious.

Gain Ability:

Danger Sense (O) Add +2 to all rolls to avoid traps and surprise hazards.

J) PASS THROUGH AN ARCANE TRANSIT CHAMBER

Lingering magic, unstable runes, and strange energies respond only to practiced hands.

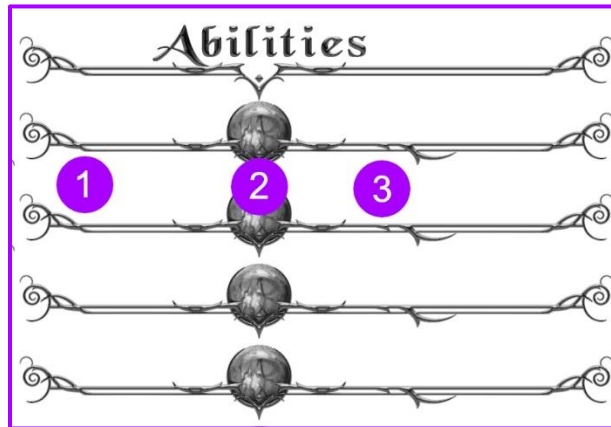
Gain Ability:

Arcane Adept (O) Add +2 to all rolls to handle and deal with magic (non-combat).

Abilities are listed in the following way:

Name	Use	Description
Arcane Adept	O	Add +2 to all rolls to handle and deal with magic (non-combat).

The ability you just acquired is considered a skill. There will be reminders when you can use such an ability.
Example: Search the room. [roll d20 + Intellect] Reminder: Investigator



1. Note down your Ability's Name.
2. Note down the Ability's Usage: In combat (I), out of combat (O), or both in and out of combat (B).
3. Note down your Ability's Description.

SCENE 6: UNRULY GOBLINS

You hear kackling and mumbling from up ahead in the hall. As you get near, the sound of a loud thwack resonates in the stone corridor. Torches finally light up the scene. Several older goblins hover over a smaller young goblin, taunting and threatening the creature. They pause for a moment to glance at you as you make your presence known.

YOU DECIDE TO...

What would your villain choose to do here? Pick an action they take. How they act here will grant your villain a second ability.

A) BEAT THE GOBLINS INTO SUBMISSION

A show of force may end the torment quickly and decisively. You solve problems with raw physical dominance.

Gain Ability:

Reroll Strength (B) Once per Page: Reroll any D20 + Strength roll and take the new result.

B) KILL ONE OF THE GOBLINS

Blood is an effective lesson, and the rest will understand it. When you strike, it is meant to be final.

Gain Ability:

Double Damage (I) Whenever you roll a 20 on an Attack roll (without modifiers), double the Damage roll. (Roll the damage dice again and add it to the original roll).

C) ORDER THEM TO STOP

Authority carries weight here, if you sound like you mean it. Your voice alone can bend weaker wills.

Gain Ability:

Reroll Charisma (B) Once per Page: Reroll any D20 + Charisma roll and take the new result.

D) JOIN IN ON THE TORMENT

Cruelty earns laughs and proves you belong among them. Pain fuels your aggression, and violence escalates quickly.

Gain Ability:

Attack Bonus After Damage (I) Whenever you take damage from an enemy, add +2 to your next Attack roll on the Page.

E) IGNORE THE SCENE AND KEEP WALKING

It is not your problem, and time is short. You survive by avoiding trouble and trusting fate to smooth the rest.

Gain Ability:

Lucky (B) Whenever you roll a 1 on any D20, reroll and take the new result. If the new result is also a 1, it must be kept.

F) DEMAND A BRIBE TO LOOK THE OTHER WAY

Fear loosens pockets as easily as fists break bones. You know how to turn intimidation into profit.

Gain Ability:

Currency Boon (O) You may use boons to add D4 Gold to your inventory.

G) DEFEND THE YOUNG GOBLIN

Intervention may earn loyalty, or trouble, or both. Others will suffer to keep you standing.

Gain Ability:

Minion Defense (B) Sacrifice a Minion to add +2 to a single Defense roll.

H) TURN THE BULLIES AGAINST EACH OTHER

A few well placed words can start a much better fight. You prefer manipulation over direct confrontation.

Gain Ability:

Reroll Intellect (B) Once per Page: Reroll any D20 + Intellect roll and take the new result.

I) THREATEN TO REPORT THEM TO A SUPERIOR

Rules matter when the consequences are severe enough. You understand systems of power and how to exploit them.

Gain Ability:

Reroll Wisdom (B) Once per Page: Reroll any D20 + Wisdom roll and take the new result.

J) TEST THE YOUNG GOBLIN INSTEAD

If they survive, perhaps they deserve to stay. You see minions as tools to be spent in pursuit of strength.

Gain Ability:

Minion Attack (I) Sacrifice a minion to add +1 to a single Attack roll.

Notes about these abilities.

Name	Use	Description
Reroll Attack	I	Once per Page: Reroll an Attack roll and take the new result.
Feel free to change the name of the ability to suit the theme of your character.	Can be used in combat (I), out of combat (O), or both in and out of combat (B).	Describes what the ability does and how often it can be used. Per Page: Limited to a set number of uses per calendar page. You may use it again on the following page. Per Rest: Can only be used a set number of times between Rests. You will need to wait until your character takes a rest before you can recover these expended uses.

SCENE 7: MAKE YOURSELF USEFUL

You report to your ranked superior, Grask. The battle-scarred Orc bears the marks of a life spent breaking doors and bones for the Overlord. His missing eye was payment for disobedience long ago, and the iron-tipped lash at his side ensures he never forgets who holds the chain now.

Grask looks you over, his single eye narrowing as he weighs your worth. "Pathetic. Why do I always get the weak ones?" He snorts. "You want to avoid scraping pots in the kitchens, you'll prove yourself." He jerks his head toward the hall. "Plenty needs doing, and I'm feeling generous. I'll let you choose. Show me what you're best at."

AFTER CONSIDERING YOUR OPTIONS, YOU CHOOSE TO...

Pick a task that your character would excel at. This decision will grant them another ability.

A) EXTRACT INFORMATION FROM A CAPTURED PRISONER

Secrets are currency in the Dark Citadel, and you know how to spend pain wisely. You know exactly when to apply pressure.

Gain Ability:

Reroll Attack (I) Once per Page: Reroll an Attack roll and take the new result.

B) PLOT NEW WALL FORTIFICATIONS

You study weak points and killing zones, preparing the castle for the next inevitable assault. Preparation and positioning keep you alive.

Gain Ability:

Reroll Defense (I) Once per Page: Reroll a Defense roll and take the new result.

C) SNEAK INTO THE SLEEPING THRAXOGIL'S CHAMBER

The creature guards something valuable, and waking it would be a mistake. Precision and timing keep you unseen.

Gain Ability:

Reroll Dexterity (B) Once per Page: Reroll any D20 + Dexterity roll and take the new result.

D) CHALLENGE THE WAR CHIEF TO A SANCTIONED MATCH

Victory earns respect. Defeat earns scars and lessons. When you commit to violence, you commit fully.

Gain Ability:

Damage Bonus Page (I) Once per Page: Add D4 to a single Damage roll.

E) REPAIR A DAMAGED MAGICAL ARTIFACT

Its power is unstable, but in skilled hands it could be devastating. You know how to coax extra power from dangerous tools.

Gain Ability:

Item Boost (O) When using an item that requires a dice roll, gain a +1 to the result.

F) LEAD A RAID SIMULATION AGAINST SUMMONED INVADERS

Command, timing, and brutality will be tested under watchful eyes. Your followers strike harder under your direction.

Gain Ability:

Minion Damage (I) Sacrifice a minion to add +1 to a single Damage roll.

G) NEGOTIATE WITH A DANGEROUS EMISSARY

Words may succeed where blades would doom the citadel. You gain leverage beyond the obvious reward.

Gain Ability:

Second Boon (B) You can acquire and save a second boon.

H) TEST EXPERIMENTAL WEAPONS FRESH FROM THE FORGES

Someone must prove whether they work as intended. You excel at making the first strike count.

Gain Ability:

Attack Bonus Page (I) Once per Page: Add D4 to a single Attack roll.

I) PERFORM A DARK RITUAL TO EMPOWER THE CASTLE

The cost is known only to you, and to whatever answers the call. Dark power sustains you in moments of need.

Gain Ability:

Boon Heal (B) You may use boons to restore D4 health, up to your Max Health.

J) TRAIN ELITE MINIONS IN ADVANCED COMBAT TACTICS

Only those who survive the lesson will be worth keeping. You teach aggression over caution.

Gain Ability:

Reduce Defense Gain Attack (I) Once per Page: Reduce your Defense by -2 and add +2 to all Attack rolls for the Page.

K) ESCORT A CURSED RELIC THROUGH THE CITADEL

Its whispers grow louder with every step. You endure what would break others.

Gain Ability:

Reroll Constitution (B) Once per Page: Reroll any D20 + Constitution roll and take the new result.

L) DEVISE AN AMBUSH PLAN FOR THE NEXT INVASION FORCE

Timing, terrain, and terror must align perfectly. You favor overwhelming force over personal safety.

Gain Ability:

Reduce Defense Gain Damage (I) Once per Page: Reduce your Defense by -2 and add +2 to all Damage rolls for the Page.

M) HUNT A SPY HIDING AMONG THE STAFF

Someone is feeding information to the enemy. You know how to extract value from what others overlook.

Gain Ability:

Loot Extra (O) When you loot ingredients via the backpack icon, gain 1 extra ingredient of the same type.

SCENE 8: A HIGHER PURPOSE

Grask witnesses the precision and efficiency with which you pulled off your task. He smiles a toothy grin, brandishing his lower tusks menacingly.

You begin to question how long it will take before you're the one giving orders, but Grask already understands your potential. Seeing that you are more powerful and useful than initially perceived, he knows you can be more useful elsewhere.

"You have promise," he grunts. "I'm sending you directly to the High Mage. He is in his lab, high in the west tower. Report to him immediately."

You find the High Mage in his experimentation lab, working on two flesh golems. They lay on cold slabs with hoses and probes protruding from their newly stitched skin, connecting them to large machines nearby.

He notices you immediately but finishes his task before turning to you calmly. "So, Grask sent you to me, then? What makes you special?"

CHOOSE YOUR SPECIALIZATION...

Your villain's Specialization is either a "Warrior," "Spellcaster," or "Surge Caster." While all characters can use any abilities from a common set, each specialization has a unique set of abilities that only they can use.

A) SPELLCASTER

A Spellcaster has spell points. Spellcaster abilities will require spending a spell point from a resource pool. These abilities can be used multiple times per page or rest if a spell point is available. It will be up to you to ration Spell Points effectively. Spellcasters have strong abilities, but they are limited to how many times they can be used per Rest.

Gain Ability:

Spells - You have 2 Spell Points you can use to cast spells. Regain all used spell points on a Rest.

B) SURGE CASTER

While often less effective than other abilities, a Surge Caster can use their abilities more frequently. They rely on a limited resource pool of surges that replenish daily. Surge Casters have the greatest flexibility, but they have a limited number of Surges per page.

Gain Ability:

Surges - You have 1 Surge you can use to activate surge abilities. Regain all used surges at the beginning of each page.

C) WARRIOR

A Warrior does not rely on a pool of resources. They have a balance of both usage frequency and power. Warriors have several per-Page abilities that are more targeted, but stronger than Surges, and their per-Rest abilities are a little more powerful compared to Spellcaster's spells.

SCENE 9: EXPERIMENT GONE WRONG

"We will see if your contributions at the Dark Citadel can amount to anything worthy."

The High Mage pauses for a moment of thought before getting back to work.

While you are here, I'll let you enjoy being a witness to my latest creation.

The High Mage activates the machines with a flair of magic and a maniacal cackle. They begin to pump and whirl, emitting crackling energy. The flesh golems begin to stir as energy flows into them.

Zapp! With a flash of light and a pulse of raw arcane power. The flesh golems spring to life in a fury of confusion and anger.

One moves to attack the High Mage, but with a flick of his hand and a quick incantation, the golem drops lifelessly to the floor. The smaller golem still stands and charges straight towards you.

The High Mage doesn't move to help. He watches you to see what you do next. You don't have time to consider your options. You must rely on instinct or be squished by the golem's massive fists.

IF YOU ARE A SPELLCASTER, CHOOSE YOUR NEXT MOVE.

You make your gestures and speak your mystic words to conjure a spell. You...

A) UNLEASH A RAW ARCANE BLAST

You pour power straight into destruction, aiming to tear the construct apart before it can strike.

Gain Abilities:

Spell Attack Bonus (I) Use one Spell Point: Add D4 to all Attack rolls for the Page.

Spell Damage Bonus (I) Use one Spell Point: Add D4 to all Damage rolls for the Page.

B) WEAVE A DEFENSIVE WARD AROUND YOURSELF

Runes flare into existence as you brace for the impact, magic hardening the air around you.

Gain Abilities:

Spell Defense Bonus (I) Use one Spell Point: Add D4 to all Defense rolls for the Page.

Spell Reduce Damage (B) Use one Spell Point: Reduce the damage from a single source by -D4 (to a minimum of 0).

C) OVERCHARGE YOUR BODY WITH UNNATURAL POWER

Magic floods your muscles and bones, pushing your physical limits beyond mortal restraint.

Gain Ability:

Spell Physical Trait Bonus (B) Use one Spell Point: Add D6 to all rolls for Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution for the Page.

D) SHARPEN YOUR MIND AND BEND THE BATTLEFIELD TO YOUR WILL

Your thoughts crystallize, calculations and incantations flowing faster than fear.

Gain Ability:

Spell Mental Trait Bonus (B) Use one Spell Point: Add D6 to all rolls for Wisdom, Intellect, and Charisma for the Page.

E) TWIST THE SPELL TO GUARANTEE SUCCESS

You focus everything into a single, perfect motion, refusing to let this moment fail.

Gain Abilities:

Spell Trait Bonus Single (B) Use one Spell Point: Add +10 to a single roll for Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Wisdom, Intellect, or Charisma.

Spell Ignore Combat Statuses (I) Use one Spell Point: Ignore all effects of Restrained, Weakened, Frightened, and Confused statuses for the Page.

IF YOU ARE A SURGE CASTER, CHOOSE YOUR NEXT MOVE.

You instinctively summon the power within yourself and manifest it into reality. You...

A) DRIVE YOUR POWER STRAIGHT INTO OFFENSE

You channel the surge into a violent release, pushing your strike beyond its natural limits.

Gain Abilities:

Attack Surge (I) Use 1 Surge: Add D4 to a single Attack roll.

Damage Surge (I) Use 1 Surge: Add D4 to a single Damage roll.

B) BRACE AS THE GOLEM CRASHES TOWARD YOU

You harden yourself at the last second, raw energy reinforcing your stance against the blow.

Gain Abilities:

Defense Surge (I) Use 1 Surge: Add D4 to a single Defense roll.

Reroll Defense Surge (I) Use 1 Surge: Reroll a Defense roll and take the new result.

C) PUSH PAST A FAILED STRIKE WITH PURE WILL

Your first attempt falters, but you refuse to let momentum die.

Gain Abilities:

Reroll Attack Surge (I) Use 1 Surge: Reroll an Attack roll and take the new result.

Damage Surge (I) Use 1 Surge: Add D4 to a single Damage roll.

D) MOVE WITH SUDDEN, EXPLOSIVE PRECISION

Your body reacts before thought, surging with speed and control.

Gain Abilities:

Athletic Surge (B) Use 1 Surge: add a D4 to a single D20 Strength or Dexterity Roll

Attack Surge (I) Use 1 Surge: Add D4 to a single Attack roll.

E) STEADY YOUR CORE AND FORCE THE MOMENT TO BEND

You draw the surge inward, anchoring your body and presence against fear and impact.

Gain Ability: Presence Surge (B) Use 1 Surge: add a D4 to a single D20 Constitution or Charisma roll

Gain Ability:

Defense Surge (I) Use 1 Surge: Add D4 to a single Defense roll.

IF YOU ARE A WARRIOR, CHOOSE YOUR NEXT MOVE.

You move without hesitation into a dazzling display of raw physical power. You...

A) SMASH FORWARD WITH OVERWHELMING FORCE

You commit fully to the strike, putting everything you have behind a single devastating blow.

Gain Ability:

Strength Bonus Page (I) Once per Page: Add your Strength modifier to a single Attack and Damage roll.

B) ENTER A STATE OF UNSTOPPABLE PHYSICAL DOMINANCE

Your muscles surge with power as pain and fatigue become distant concerns.

Gain Ability:

Physical Trait Bonus Rest (B) Once per Rest: Add D8 to all rolls for Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution for the Page.

C) PRESS THE ATTACK WITHOUT MERCY

You lean into aggression, striking harder and harder until something gives.

Gain Abilities:

Attack Bonus Rest (I) Once per Rest: Add D6 to all Attack rolls for the Page.

Damage Bonus Rest (I) Once per Rest: Add D6 to all Damage rolls for the Page.

D) PLANT YOUR FEET AND WEATHER THE ASSAULT

You refuse to be moved, letting the golem exhaust itself against your defense.

Gain Abilities:

Defense Bonus Rest (I) Once per Rest: Add D6 to all Defense rolls for the Page.

Warrior Heal (B) Once per Rest: Restore your Health by D8 up to your maximum.

E) FIGHT THROUGH FEAR AND RESTRAINT BY SHEER WILL

Nothing slows you now. You tear free of doubt, pain, and control alike.

Gain Abilities:

Ignore Combat Statuses (I) Once per Rest: Ignore all effects of Restrained, Weakened, Frightened, and Confused statuses for the Page.

Damage Bonus Rest (I) Once per Rest: Add D6 to all Damage rolls for the Page.

LET'S MOVE ON, SHALL WE?

Without hesitation, you make quick work of the flesh golem. It falls onto the stone floor with a loud thud, never to rise again. The High Mage's face is impassive, but you think you see a bit of satisfaction behind his eyes.

"Good enough. Perhaps you are ready to serve the Overlord himself. Be gone for now, but return tomorrow. I have an important task for you." He dismisses you with a wave of your hand.

CONGRATS! YOU HAVE FINISHED THIS CHARACTER CREATION STORY!

You have successfully created a villain that can be played in the 2026 Quest Calendar: Souls of Saraku. Use the full rules for character creation for advanced customization and to level up your villain beyond level 1. You may also continue to play as one of the main 6 Villains, instead.

The choice is yours. Now, go forth and build your evil empire.

THE END