

## CHARACTER

**NAME:** Caul Rickrak

**RACE:** Caliban

**CLASS:** Barbarian

### FEATURES:

- **Height:** 6'6"
- **Weight:** 280lbs
- **Age:** 25
  
- **Features:**
  - **Caliban Markings:** As far as Caliban go Caul looks fairly close to human, he simply appears brutish and dimwitted in the face. If he is seen with little or no clothing however his twisted body is clearly visible. Muscles bulge at awkward angles, skin stretches in red, seemingly painful patterns. A few bones jar through his skin but they serve no true purpose.
  - **Skin Color:** Chestnut
  - **Hair:** Brown, short cropped
  
- **Personality Traits**
  - Consistently attempts to hide his Caliban heritage. Dresses in clothing that hides everything but his face (his least Caliban feature). Will not reveal that he is Caliban to anyone if he can help it. If asked about his brute strength or size he will attempt to play up that he is from The Misted Woods where all of his people are large.
  - Believes he is cursed by the Lawbringer himself and fears any cleric of the god. Has little regard for religion and follows no Deity as of yet, his only experience with such things was The Lawbringer and he cares little for blind obedience.
  - Hates those who bully others and has a natural aversion to doing it himself unless he can reason that it is for some better goal than mere personal gain.
  - Fears/Respects the arcane arts and those who use them.
  - Will fight any return to The Misted Woods

**Misted Woods Background:** Add Nature to you class skill list, and you gain a +2 bonus to Nature checks. You gain a +1 bonus to Initiative.

**Adventurer Template:** Additional 1 Language Rank, and have Traveler's Effort as an encounter power.

# BACKGROUND

Little is known about Caul's actual birth. Late one moonless night Lady Adelaide, surrounded by some of the Baron's enforcers, knocked on the first door they came to in the settlement of Ungrad. When Simmons and Tinrel Rickrak opened their door they stood petrified as a bundle was deposited in their arms. Without a word of explanation, the Lady and her enforcers strode into the darkness. Tinrel fainted when she glanced upon the newborn and Simmons grimaced, muttering darkly about evil curses.

Caul did not enjoy an easy upbringing. His adopted parents were quick to remind him he was not of their family, though they were never outright cruel. Cruelty was reserved for the rest of the town. Other children openly mocked him and the adults looked the other way. He was always strong but was unable to defend himself as any hurt upon the children of the town by his hand was never looked upon as self defense. Because of his inaction he was bullied mercilessly, beaten almost daily.

When he finally reached adulthood he left the town, much to everyone's relief. He headed directly to the headquarters of the Baron's enforcers as he meant to discover the secrets behind his birth. Though he looked it, he was not a complete simpleton and did not spread the story of his midnight arrival in Ungrad and instead decided to join the enforcer ranks until he could glean the information somehow. Training with the enforcers was the closest thing to happiness he had experienced to date. He loved the thrill of being praised for his brutality and strength, something he had bottled up for years.

However, when he became a full enforcer he soon discovered that many of the jobs he took part in were nothing more than another form of the bullying he had grown to despise as a child. Because of this he slipped away in the night, and took on the job of guarding a merchant caravan headed out of his domain. He had little desire to ever see it again. *(and then...Jake takes over!)* Next page is background deets.

## MISTED WOODS , VALACHAN, UNGRAD

Cultural Level: Medieval (7).

**Landscape:** Full Ecology (Temperate Forests and Hills). Nestled in the southwestern Core, Valachan (VAHL-eh-kahn) is a rugged domain blanketed by lush evergreen forests and prowled by fearsome black panthers. The trees are ancient and massive, shrouded by cool fog and a thick beard of mosses. Eerie hoots and growls echo through the hollows, and the chill air is heavy with the primeval scent of damp redwoods. Although the shadowy understory is dotted with low, dewy ferns, travel is difficult due to the treacherous terrain. Ridges and narrow canyons wind their way through the domain, providing concealment for skulking predators. Rocky streams flow eastward toward the Arden River, their whitewater rapids teeming with fish. Villages are densely clustered in Valachan, bustling pockets of industriousness amid the eldritch wilderness. The windowless buildings are constructed of heavy logs or planks, with gabled roofs shingled in black slate. Large, single-room lodges are common even among wealthy nobles, who take great pride in their cavernous abodes and encourage villagers to socialize within. Structures are decorated with elaborate, stylized carvings of panthers, bears, wolves, and ravens. Heraldry is important to the Valachani, and homes are proudly adorned with the matriarch's insignia. Baron von Kharkov's Castle Pantara, in contrast to the inviting homes of his subjects, is a menacing fortress of charcoal-gray stone. Although temperate, the Valachan's climate is exceedingly wet, with heavy rainfall throughout the year. Temperatures are moderate through all seasons, but sweltering summers occur occasionally.

**Major Settlements:** Helbenik (pop. 3,500), Rotwald (pop. 4,400), Ungrad (pop. 1,500).

**The Folk:** Population — 19,100; Humans 97%, Gnomes 2%, Other 1%.

**Languages-** Vaasi,\* Mordentish, Gnome, Sithican.

**Religions-**Ezra, Hala.

Valachani are tall, muscular people with wide shoulders and long, sturdy limbs. Their skin is typically a dark coffee brown, though colors ranging from a creamy tan to nearly charcoal black occur. Eye color is almost always dark brown, but the odd individual with unsettling bile-yellow eyes is sometimes born. Valachani hair is glossy black and worn long and straight by both genders. Men never wear beards or mustaches, but many grow long sideburns. Clothing is durable and simple, with both men and women preferring to go about in loose trousers and tunics often decorated with fringe and animal teeth. Faded black and white are the favorite colors, though these are accented with bold reds, greens, and blues. Valachani wear knee high boots of soft leather throughout the year, even when not outdoors. The Valachani are a stalwart people accustomed to a rustic life amid the domain's eerie forests. They personify the creatures of the forest in myths, reserving their greatest reverence and fear for the panthers, which are numerous and notoriously cunning. Valachani value perseverance and strong family ties but tend to be suspicious of "book learning" and the trappings of more advanced domains. A Valchani who does not know how to shoot a bow or survive in the wilderness is less than a whole person. Despite their individualism, the Valachani are social people with exceedingly complex rituals for life's milestones, including birth, coming of age, marriage, and death. Lengthy

festivals mark these events in settlements. Handcrafted gifts are exchanged and wealthy Valachani attempt to outdo one another by obtaining the best foodstuffs and entertainment. The Law: Aristocratic monarchy.

Valachan's ruler, Baron Urik von Kharkov, is a cold man who values obedience and his own privacy above all else. This stern aloofness does not endear the baron to his subjects, but the Valachani have learned to pay their taxes dutifully and thereby avoid the baron's attention and infamous temper. Von Kharkov demands petty servitude from random commoners on occasion, summoning them to Castle Pantara for a single night. Those who are summoned often return infected with the White Fever, a mild but debilitating flu that strikes many Valachani throughout their lives. Each year, von Kharkov forcefully takes a young Valachani woman as his bride; to date, the unfortunate soul he chooses has never lived out the year. These sinister facts only heighten fear of the baron and feed rumors that he truly is inhuman.

The baron's private army of enforcers collects taxes and rounds up anyone unfortunate enough to draw von Kharkov's ire. Expertly trained in swordsmanship and wilderness skills, these enforcers are monstrous sadists zealously loyal to their lord. The mysterious Lady Adelaide, the Veiled Mistress, commands them. Arrogant and astonishingly vicious, Adelaide shares the appetites of the baron. She can be bribed by the offering of a handsome youth, who usually emerges scarred without and within from the mistress's wicked attentions.

Despite the oppressive presence of the baron's minions, life in most Valachani settlements is peaceful. The most powerful nobles administer justice and arbitrate disputes as they see fit, but corruption is rare. Nobility is hereditary through the mother's side, and men rather than women marry out of their families. Although tradition dictates that nobles be respected and deferred to because of their wealth, commoners do not tolerate incompetence or weakness in their betters. Nobles who lack the guile to defend their positions are quickly eliminated and their assets divided among the remaining aristocrats. Serving in a settlement's militia is an honorable and profitable pursuit, as nobles reward service with wealth, titles, and arranged marriages.

### **Trade and Diplomacy:**

Resources — wheat, barley, hops, cherries, apples, peas, flower bulbs, hogs, sheep, dairy, salmon, trout, timber, furs, gold, copper, bows, furniture. Coinage — pantherhead (gp), cateye (sp), claw (cp).

Despite expanding trade with neighboring domains, Valachan retains a strong streak of independence. Baron von Kharkov apparently has little interest in establishing alliances with other realms. His enforcers patrol the domain's frontiers irregularly, equally likely to harass, rob, or murder curious travelers. Thus, the Valachani are left to forge their own bonds with foreign merchants. For now, the Valachani seem content to trade their wares and avoid entangling themselves in the affairs of other lands.

**Characters: Classes** — barbarians, druids, fighters, rangers, sorcerers.