**Thanatophilia** is a bar and nightclub in Port Ol’val secretly controlled by House Qel-Droma. Locally famous for its death-themed decorations, the business front is currently under the reluctant supervision of Timeros Caesus Entar Arconae.

**Location and Floor Space**

Despite ostensibly keeping a low profile, Thanatophilia is moderately famous among the Port’s younger crowd. It is a place for gangs to look tough, the young to be wild, and hardened criminals to cut deals on everything from drug sales to assassination contracts. The staff keeps a policy of strict omerta and neutrality amongst Ol’val’s warring factions, remaining utterly independent from any and all groups who might seek to control it. The rare occasions in which this noninterference has been tested typically result in horrific violence to all challengers: the club’s secret backers will brook no interference with its purpose.

The drinking establishment is located fairly centrally in the Besadii Entertainment district of Port Ol’val, in a fairly quiet neighborhood of an otherwise rowdy area. While the recent collapse of gang relations within the Shadowport has made most of Ol’val a dangerous and violent area, the immediate surroundings of the bar occupy a doldrum amidst the storm of unrest. This, in part, is due to Thanatophilia’s own influence, as the establishment is known to respond unfavorably to violence near its doors.

The bar’s main area is a single large and spacious room. While Thanatophilia is technically open to all, Sere (below) has long ago realized that there would be little sense in provoking the patrons to open conflict, and thus seats each party at a separate table among its twelve large tables, all of them arranged around a single stage and dance pit. A central bar area and the dance floor are the only place the visitors normally interact. As it is, the clients’ unruly nature results in the occasional fistfight but little more.

There are a few back-rooms as well, used as places of business for visiting Qel-Dromans, lodging for the bar’s staff (most of whom remain on or near the premises at all hours) and the occasional private liaison between the more amorous patrons. All rooms are rigorously sound-proofed, and the staff rarely bothers to check its contents until the end of business, usually well into the morning.

However, it is not the drinks, the dancing or the sex that drive people to visit Thanatophilia, but its morbid decorations. Each of the bar’s tables is made out from vacuum-sealed transparisteel, and each contains the naked corpse of a former club patron, nearly always showing gruesome death wounds. It is a matter of debate where the staff manage to get their corpses: some were people who disturbed the peace; others, slain members of gangs (the staff takes particular note of those, and tries to avoid seating known gangs at the table showing their compatriots’ corpse). The drinks, likewise, are known to have the odd bone embedded in their glasses, and many of the back rooms are decorated with the cured skins of what may well be humanoids. As horrific as the sight purports to be, the lack of central authority within Ol’Val guarantees that there is no crackdown imminent among the club. And, with no end in sight to the Shadowport’s perpetual violence, there is never a shortage of corpses to go around.

The atmosphere within Thanatophilia is one of raucous shouts and partying underlying deep terror. It is a place where people come to laugh in the face of death, trying to drown their fears in alcohol and debauchery while pretending they have no fear. Every patron is aware that, tomorrow, they might be decorating the table, and even the staff is terrified behind their smiles.

For some, it is too much. Some turn away from Thanatophilia’s doors and never go back. Some realize that, despite pretensions to the contrary, their youth does not make them invincible, and turn away for good. It is a depressing commentary on the state of Ol’Val that most do not.

**Staff**

While Timeros is technically in charge of Thanatophilia, he rarely actively interferes in its operations, acting mostly as an administrator and - rarely- enforcer. Instead, he leaves most of the club’s operations to a variety of hired staff, as well as several specially-selected employees.

*Sere*

The club’s proprietor in all but name, Sere effectively takes care of the club’s business. A small and waifish young Human, Sere is flawlessly polite and quick to smile, yet her control over the staff and patrons is unwavering. She is also responsible for evicting miscreants from the premises. She gives those who do not comply immediately a sad smile as the bouncers close in; those that still refuse often end up decorating the establishment.

While she hides it well, the club’s more discerning patrons tend to eventually realize the truth: Sere is *terrified*, too quick to smile and flinching at anything unexpected. Between the omnipresent violence and her master’s terrifying presence, the young woman’s mind has cracked into a state of constant fear and anxiety. One of only two people at Thanatophilia aware of Timeros’ true identity, she is so utterly cowed by now that she can no longer even consider running away.

*Copper*

Copper is Thanatophilia’s most experienced bartender and, unknown even to the rest of the Staff, a veteran of the Dajorra Intelligence Agency who traveled with Timeros to Port Ol’val. A self-described genius of mixology, the dour Selenian is actually only average, though he persists in experimenting with drinks that range from fairly good to truly poisonous. One of the most popular games among the patrons is to dare one another to try his latest invention.

While usually as outwardly kind as the rest of the staff, Copper has an occasional dour streak brought on by his sampling of his own experiments. When he does, he tends to bluntly tell the patrons that their lives are worthless and that they are likely to die before the year is out. The drinking gang members tend to treat this as a game as well, vying to draw the most cynical statement from the elderly bartender.

*Sharrow*

Sharrow is the closest thing Thanatophilia has to a professional entertainer. While technically a serving girl, the Hapan woman often abandons her duties as the night progresses, choosing to drink, dance and chat with the patrons. A morbid anomaly even among the patrons, she usually dresses in revealing outfits with corpse-themed makeup and a tattoo on her back proudly proclaims that “dead girls don’t say no”.

Sharrow is as broken as the rest of the staff, but where Sere hides her anxieties beneath a quick smile, the Hapan has instead gone utterly mad, smothering her fears beneath an outpouring of her supposed ‘love’ for the dead. So far, no one has managed to substantiate the rumors that she was once caught straddling one of the corpses embedded in the table.

**Secrets**

It is an open secret that Thanatophilia is a place for various gangs to meet in peace and negotiate any issues between them. Even worse kept is the fact that the bar commonly acts as a clearing house for various drug and arms deals, or even assassinations. Worst kept of all is that Timeros himself occasionally sees fit to take part in those actions.

What is *not* a commonly-known secret is that any information heard by the staff is reported immediately to Sere, who then alerts Qel-Droma to anything that may interest it. Copper, likewise, sends anything of note to the Dajorra Intelligence Agency to aid it in keeping tabs on the Shadowport. Both Qel-Droma and the DIA rarely act on the intelligence they receive. Instead, they watch and wait, knowing that when the time comes to scour Ol’val of rival presences, they will have a nearly-complete map of all hostile interests to be neutralized.