

Introduction



This guide will be much cleaner to read if you disable print layout (in the “view” menu).

Characters in Frosthaven don’t have a fixed gender, so that you can roleplay your character as the gender of your choosing. I played my first Deathwalker as a woman, so I’ll be using she/her pronouns. Feel free to choose a different gender for your Deathwalker!

The Deathwalker is a low health character that deals large amounts of damage and provides some crowd control. She uses dark to enhance some of her attacks, but her main focus is a special mechanic: shadows. The Deathwalker can create, move, and consume shadows using her ability cards. These shadows enable or enhance her attacks, allowing her to perform more powerful attacks and traverse the battlefield very rapidly. She will need to take some time to manage their positioning, but the payoff is very well worth it.

Shadows are created and consumed by your ability cards. Shadows completely ignore everything except walls and other shadows for the purpose of their placement and movement. They can be placed in any hex, excepting those with another shadow present. You can only have five shadows at once; if you would place a sixth, you must first remove an existing shadow. Shadows are considered adjacent to figures both in or adjacent to their own hex.

By themselves, shadows do not have any effect. However, many of your abilities are stronger if you have more shadows, shadows in the correct positions, or if you remove shadows as part of the ability. Because many of these abilities require precise positioning of shadows, you have a number of effects that let you move shadows around the map.

While you have a number of ways to remove shadows, you only have a few ways to create shadows, especially at lower levels. Removing them does have a significant cost and you will want to be careful about managing your shadow economy.

There are two main axes the deathwalker can focus on with their shadows: whether they want to consume shadows for effects or position them precisely for effects; and whether or not they want to use shadows from a distance or use shadows from up close. While it is tempting to put the strongest emphasis on whether or not you consume shadows, the fact remains that if you never consume any shadows, you will eventually have lots of wasted potential. As a result, we will explore two potential ways to focus our build: consuming from up close, and consuming from afar. These are certainly not the only ways to build this class: you could blend the builds together, choose a more support focus, or come up with an entirely different plan. The goal here is to showcase two major playstyles and provide a starting point for those who wish to understand the deathwalker better. These builds are somewhat inspired by Gripeway, who published a [video guide](#) emphasizing the first of these two build paths.

The first build, which we will call the [Shadow Step](#) build (or simply the melee build), emphasizes attacks from close range. The name Shadow Step implies that we will spend a lot of time occupying our own shadows. This is encouraged in particular by one of our perks, which gives enemies targeting us permanent disadvantage while we occupy our own shadows. We will look to maintain a high shadow count to empower [Strength of the Abyss](#), and spend lots of time moving ourself and our shadows into more powerful positions.

The second build, which the community has dubbed [Puppetmaster](#) (or simply ranged), emphasizes attacking from a distance. Moving ourself is not a significant concern as the vast majority of our attacks require positioning of our shadows, not ourself, so we will use most of our bottom actions to move shadows into position or to teleport ourself. We don't need to maintain a very high shadow count, and moving our shadows is time consuming, so as long as we maintain one or two shadows we are happy to spend the excess as soon as we get them.

Level 1 Cards

Call to the Abyss



Call to the Abyss is a 100% mandatory card for any Deathwalker. This is your only way to repeatedly make shadows at lower levels, and without shadows, your power is greatly diminished. The top action allows you to mark any enemy attacked by you or one of your summons. When a marked enemy dies, you may create a shadow in the figure's hex or in an adjacent hex. It is important to note that you do not have to be the one to land the killing blow; it is enough to mark an enemy, then have an ally, trap, wound, or other source of damage finish them off. You can only have one enemy marked at once, so when you attack a different enemy, you must choose (before pulling your modifier) whether to move the mark or leave it on the previous target. Remember that when performing multitarget attacks, you can choose the order of targets; whenever practical, you should choose to first attack targets that have a chance of dying, so that you can generate shadows from the kills and leave the last enemy marked. This will be the first or second action you play in nearly every scenario in every level of every build path. Through this action, you can consistently generate somewhere in the range of 3-5 shadows in a longer rest cycle, depending on how much health the enemies have.

The bottom action reliably makes exactly one shadow per rest cycle. In some scenarios where the first room is extremely dangerous and your team needs you to act immediately, you can get away with using this on your first turn and doing something with shadows right away. In general, we would like to avoid using this, not because the action is bad, but because of the opportunity

cost of not being able to use the top. Not having the top for an entire rest cycle will feel *very* bad, as you will make one shadow on bottom but lose at least two or three from the top. In fact, we would love to have both, and if you had an item or ally that can recover a card for you (such as the stamina potion from Gloomhaven), you could open with the bottom of this card on the first round, recover the card, and play the top on turn two or three.

Eclipse



Eclipse offers an additional method for making shadows. You get three shadows right away, and you get some of your element as a nice kicker. Of course, [Call to the Abyss](#) will generate more shadows over the course of a scenario. However, there are a few big reasons we might play Eclipse. First, Eclipse makes the shadows instantly. If there aren't low HP enemies that are likely to die in the first two rounds, you are going to be struggling without shadows at the start of the scenario. Eclipse can help you come online a bit faster. Because this isn't on the same card as [Call to the Abyss](#), we can even do both! We have eleven cards, so in scenarios requiring high tempo at the beginning we can get away with using both actions immediately. It's worth noting that neither of these shadow generating actions provide experience explicitly, but virtually every action that consumes a shadow grants you an XP for each shadow consumed, so they do provide experience indirectly. For scenarios where you need extraordinarily high impact in the first few rounds, you can play this top action with [Call to the Abyss](#)' bottom action to get four shadows immediately. This can hurt, as you won't be able to replay [Call to the Abyss](#) the same cycle (unless you have a way to get it back), but you will be exceptionally powerful for the first room.

The bottom is actually very significant for us, as we don't have a large number of high movement actions. If your plan is to traverse the map by teleporting, then this probably won't make a very large difference. If, however, you need to walk from place to place, or need to traverse a room but not the whole map, then this action is fantastic. As a result, we're more than happy to lug this around in scenarios where we don't need it in the first room, and drop it in the last room. It will cost us a loss, but it will save us many turns of repositioning the shadows from room one into room three, and that's a win.

Fluid Night



Now that we've got some shadows, let's figure out how to use them. Fluid Night sets a very high benchmark for shadow consumption with precise positioning: an attack five that creates darkness at any range. Not every action will meet this benchmark, but it's a fantastic point of comparison. Any action that consumes a shadow for less will need to justify why it's worth our time. Note that here is where we get experience: every action that consumes a shadow grants at least one experience point per shadow consumed. Fluid Night is simply a solid core action at a solid initiative, and any build that is hoping to regularly consume shadows will love this card.

The only bad part about the bottom is that we can't use the top. Spending a shadow to negate a hit is a very reasonable safety net. Ideally you won't be getting hit much when you don't want to, but if you do accidentally take one very large hit, you can use this to save your bacon. Unless you've shoved a shadow forwards in the midst of fighting, the teleport will probably not gain you much tempo in terms of positioning. However, since we can choose to skip this on small sources of damage and save it for big ones, this action is a fantastic use of a bottom action for whenever we have the spare time and don't need the top.

Anger of the Dead



Anger of the Dead lets us remove shadows in a very different way. Each shadow on its own provides low value, or moderate value if the enemy has shield. If we think of [Fluid Night](#) as +3 damage and increased ranged over the standard attack two, then it takes three shadows here to catch up. However, there is one very significant reason we love this card: XP. More often than not, you will be leaving behind at least a few shadows in a room. When progressing to the next room, we can spend tons of actions getting them in half-decent position. Alternatively, we can use this action to blow up an enemy, gain up to five XP, and then be early to the next room and start marking enemies to make shadows immediately. If the shadows have alternate uses, or if you know you'll be able to get them to the next room at low cost, I would only use this against shielded enemies. Against those, each shadow gives +2 damage, which is a fairly decent use. Otherwise, I wouldn't bother.

The bottom lets us wound everyone who starts in a shadow or enters a shadow during its turn. It's better if they start in a shadow, because the wound will tick immediately, but that's not always possible. One strong opener is to play this paired with [Eclipse](#) and create a wall of shadows for enemies to walk through. Shadows aren't negative hexes, so enemies won't avoid them. This means it's actually much easier than you might think to get wound on everything in

the scenario. It'll be difficult to have such a large impact without eclipse, as most of your shadow movement is on the bottom. That being said, even just one or two shadows in a narrow corridor can do a lot of work. And even if you can't, just using this as a fast initiative with a move two is fantastic. We aren't exactly lacking strong fast initiatives, but this is one of our best at lower levels, so just for that we're happy to keep it around.

Lingering Rot



Our last shadow removal attack comes with a terrible initiative. The top action is fantastic; this could theoretically be an attack on up to seven enemies if they clump up properly. Attack three and poison is very high value for an action with this many targets, so if we can hit at least 4 or 5 enemies, we're happy to run this loss. Since the enemies do need to clump first, we'll typically try to run this as the second card after opening a room, so that the enemies can walk up a bit first.

With a powerful loss action, we're looking for a strong, spammable bottom to go with it. Move 3 is fine, and the ability to make poison is fantastic. If our goal is to run melee attacks, we're going to love this card for our entire lifespan. If our goal is to deal our damage from a distance, we won't want to do this, both because it puts us in too much danger and because we need our bottom actions to position shadows for us.

Sunless Apparition



Here's another way we can remove a shadow for value: Sunless Apparition lets us turn a shadow into a nonloss summon. Boneshaper spends health to make their skeletons; here, we spent a shadow to make our own friend. This summon has fantastic movement and damage, though it will die if a light breeze knocks it over. Expect to summon this late, have it run in and hit once, then die to an attack next round. Still, even in this worst case, this is effectively turning a shadow into an attack 3, disarm that also marks the target. If the summon happens to hit two or more times, this is insane value. We actually love the slow initiative here, because we want to summon late and then go quick next turn. If the summon dies before we get to hit, we're not very happy with it, so try to avoid that.

The bottom is our first teleport, and it comes with a loot. The loot being before the movement means you'll need to move into position the previous turn, which is awkward if we're just teleporting away immediately, so don't expect this loot to get a lot of value if movement is at a premium. Still, being able to teleport across the map means you don't need to bring much movement for yourself if you're spending time moving your shadows anyway.

Strength of the Abyss



We're fortunate this card is good, because the initiative is not. The top of this card justifies a world where we don't aim to consume shadows, but instead prefer to leave them on the map. If we have all of our shadows out, this will be an attack six as a nonloss action. That's *incredibly* strong. It'll definitely take a few turns to get there, especially if we don't run the loss on eclipse, but once we've got them, it'll be pretty easy for us to keep them up. Unless we're running something like [Anger of the Dead](#) that consumes multiple shadows at once, we typically expect our shadow gain to be net positive, so it's still going to be worth it to spend a shadow here or there for some extra value, but the bar for that value is that much higher now that the shadow will also cost us one damage on this attack if we don't replace it.

The bottom is decent. We saw with our shadow consumption that adding +2 is fairly average in terms of what we can expect from consuming a shadow. Getting the ability to do that on every action is a very strong power. The unfortunate reality is that losing putting up this card as a loss just doesn't fit that well into what we're trying to accomplish. If we want to consume shadows for value as part of our build, then we don't want to spend shadows for the moderate value, we want them to produce insane value, like with [Fluid Night](#). Conversely, if we are trying to gain value by virtue of shadows being present, then we want the top of this card instead. Even if we

could play both, we can't really afford the stamina hit if we're trying to also play [Call to the Abyss](#), [Eclipse](#), *and* perhaps lose a card for a bursty turn. Finally, the movement typically won't find value as we can teleport whenever we really need a large step. This card is great for the top, but the bottom half of this card just isn't worth it most of the time.

Shadow Step



So now that we have a reason to leave our shadows around, we need to know what to do with them. Shadow Step is a nice example of a card that cares about shadow positioning. Top movement is fantastic, especially when it comes with an attached attack. Unfortunately for us, we don't actually have any bottom attacks early, so this isn't really an extra attack so much as it is our only attack. Still, we can either combine this with a move to rapidly traverse the map towards an enemy, or combine it with some shadow movement to properly line up the hit. This isn't our strongest attack, but the movement is good enough that we're happy to have it.

The bottom loss can be ok. An emergency shadow drop in your own space can help smooth down an awkward situation if you weren't able to get your marked target to die and really need a shadow to get anything done. The large movement and fast initiative will get you wherever you need to be before your targets move, so in a pinch this can work great. Most of the time, we won't plan to use this, but it will save our bacon in numerous occasions.

Call of Doom



With a precisely placed shadow, you can hit a lot of things for free. This is similar to the loss from [Lingering Rot](#), but it's much weaker, and muddles (with dark) instead of poisons. I wouldn't bother emphasizing the dark on this action, as muddle isn't an amazing condition and it doesn't even get you an XP. Still, if lots of enemies are low, then you can use this to potentially pick up several shadows with lucky flips. Furthermore, some of your modifiers have great conditions, so this is a good way to dig for those. This is a fantastic candidate for an expensive enhancement; for 100 gold, doubling the damage goes a long way towards guaranteeing a kill or two.

The bottom action is a core action that's not fancy, but gets the job done. We're about to see a few attacks that need darkness to function, unlike the top of this card, which can do without. Being able to make the darkness while moving a decent bit, at a fine initiative, is a staple for elemental classes. Most builds will prioritize the bottom of this card until they find more powerful ways to reliably make this element.

Wave of Anguish



Another reward for keeping shadows on the map: an attack three stemming from each one. This requires the shadows to be precisely positioned to reach full value, but if you can make this an attack 15 at level 1, this loss can't be beat. The fact that you can use multiple shadows to hit the same target means it is easier than it looks to get massive value here. I wouldn't use this for three or fewer attacks, but 4 or 5 are absolutely worth your time.

The bottom action gives us our first opportunity to manipulate shadow position. Move ourself two, then move each shadow a single hex. This isn't a ton of shadow movement, but it's good enough to position shadows already on the battlefield into slightly more advantageous positions. The main benefit here is that it lets us move as well, so for actions such as [Shadow Step](#), where we need to be in a shadow, this is a nice way to line up the action. It's not really enough movement to move shadows from room to room, so we will either need to abandon our shadows or bring some additional options.

Dark Fog



A very straightforward loss. Hit three things in a triangle, curse the ones that live, make our core element, get an XP. This could have been in the Tinkerer's kit and we wouldn't have batted an eye. The only catch is that we're not always sure when we want to get the curses and when we want to get kills for more shadows. If we kill several targets in quick succession, we get multiple shadows; if the targets live, we get multiple curses. The flexibility between curses and shadows make this a highly potent action. Just be careful: it is tempting to use this every time we see a triangle, but between this, [Call to the Abyss](#), and [Eclipse](#), our stamina is precious. Try not to use this the first instant it comes up, or we won't be able to make it to the final room.

Another consequence of losing the card is losing access to the bottom. Rather than moving all of our shadows a little, we move one shadow a lot. This will certainly get the shadow into proper position for actions like [Fluid Night](#) and [Shadow Step](#), and will actually allow us to move at least one of our shadows to the next room, hopefully to teleport to. For any build that relies on teleporting or frequent and precise shadow positioning, we're going to need this card.

Black Barrage



Black Barrage on top gives our first attack that doesn't care at all about shadows, but does care quite a bit about dark. This attack is very low risk, low reward. An attack 3 at very long range doesn't do a ton of damage, but it marks a key target at good (but not great) initiative and lets you perform the ability from a safe distance. This is a fine attack to open the scenario with at lower levels, letting you mark a target that is likely to die and set up shadows for future rounds.

The bottom is a happy medium between [Wave of Anguish](#) and [Dark Fog](#) in terms of shadow movement. We'll get to move all of our shadows, and we'll get to move them a moderate amount. Just like the top, this isn't flashy but it's solid and we're rarely upset to use this action.

Forceful Spirits



Our last dark consumption was low risk low reward; here, we get the opposite. We have to get in *close* to get the damage off here. More often than I can count, I moved in to line up this double hit and lost a card or two for my troubles. If you can avoid the punishment, though, then this is insane value. Nonloss attack six is on par with our strongest actions, and the ability to split it on two targets means we'll very frequently be able to kill the first enemy and either mark or kill the second, for a total gain of two shadows. I typically try to initiative weave with this one, pairing it with a very fast or slow initiative to ensure that I don't end up being punished for the aggressive positioning that this action requires.

The bottom action is our second nonloss teleport at low levels. The extra benefit here is that we can choose to be adjacent to the shadow. It's not a huge gain, but that might amount to one extra movement point, which often lets us perform a melee attack that we otherwise couldn't. Also, if someone is taking up our desired shadow, we can still make progress. A solid action let down only by the fact that the top is so impactful.

Rest in the Shade



Our last action is our most situational. The top lets us heal everyone who is in a shadow. This requires a lot of coordination to heal more than two targets. In scenarios with lots of negative conditions, it might be worth posturing around, but most of the time it's just not efficient. Our shadows will be near the enemies, not near our allies, and moving them properly means we'll need to move them back to attack with in the future. It's a lot of work for a very situational effect, and we're usually better off preventing damage by killing things than by healing it after the fact. There is definitely a support deathwalker build that you can attempt, but it's so dependent on who your allies are that I won't expand fully on it here. For that build, you will *love* this action. For our two damage-focused builds here, it's underwhelming at best.

The bottom is again situational. Moving all shadows six is absolutely powerful, as it lets us keep our momentum from the first room moving into the third room. However, in some cases we won't have enough shadows to bother, or the walk will be too long to be worth it, or else too short to require this loss. If the top was spammable, we'd be fine to bring this around, but unfortunately this card just doesn't make the cut.

Level-Ups

Level 2



Deepening Despair is a great nonloss attack at our best initiative to date. It requires some precise shadow positioning, but it hits for a respectable amount, creates our desired element, and doesn't consume the shadows. If you're going to be moving shadows anyway, this is a solid card that you're happy to have.

The bottom is highly situational but can singlehandedly win entire scenarios, letting your party traverse vast distances just like you can.

Restless Spirits lets us get up close and personal. We can do a decent attack with a curse, and we can eat the shadow to turn it into a huge attack. An attack six will frequently kill the target, so when you're eating the shadow, expect that you might not actually get the curse. Best case scenario puts the target low enough that your team can finish them off, so that you mark them and get the best of both worlds.

The bottom action gives you a decent shadow move, with the option to trade the shadow for some direct damage. This is our first bottom damage option, and against shielded enemies it's

absolutely phenomenal. Even if we don't want to line up the bonus damage, we're perfectly fine to have an additional long range shadow movement option.

[Shadow Step](#): Restless Spirits is the clear choice, giving us a very powerful melee attack and some situational bottom damage.

[Puppetmaster](#): Both options are solid choices, Deepening Despair for the top or Restless Spirits for the bottom. I'd typically lean towards Deepening Despair as we're lacking attacks early, but if you're starting this build at level 4+ I think Restless Spirits might be better to give us an instance of bottom damage.

Level 3



Dead Bolt is a very basic, very solid card. The top is an attack three at decent range that we should be able to frequently pump up to curse. This isn't large enough that we'll often be killing here, so the curse should actually make its way out.

The bottom is enough shadow movement that we might actually be able to move our entire shadow squad from one room to another, by using this late in the cycle, resting, then using it again early.

Ritual Sacrifice is not likely to do more than [Strength of the Abyss](#) much of the time. It has a base of two more damage, but requires the shadows to be precisely positioned. We need three shadows to tie the level one card, and four to beat it. Still, that card was borderline busted at level 1, so even if we're just picking up a second copy with a bit of variability (and a much stronger initiative), we're content. Pair this with the bottom of [Wave of Anguish](#) for maximal positioning.

The bottom will frequently just be a move two that creates dark, which, much like the top was a spinoff of [Strength of the Abyss](#), is often a second copy of [Call of Doom](#) with a slightly weaker action and a much stronger initiative. The bonus to add some shield is cute. We don't really want to use this on ourselves, and it's difficult to predict the turns where you will want a large shield, so the use cases for this are rare. Still, you can use this to create a supertank for a turn,

especially if someone has retaliate up, and you can Hoover up shadows you know you won't be able to rescue for some free XP.

[Shadow Step](#): Ritual Sacrifice provides lots of things we need and Dead Bolt doesn't. We're very happy to add Ritual Sacrifice to our toolkit.

[Puppetmaster](#): It's always Dead Bolt here. This allows us to move our shadows more efficiently, and gives us another fine use of dark when attacking.

Level 4



Well, the top action looks much like that of [Lingering Rot](#). Wound is often a little better than poison, and we don't lose the shadow, so this action is a bit better, but not by three levels, so we wouldn't take it for the top alone even if we did rely on losses.

To make this worth our time, we want a spammable bottom; and *boy*, do we get one. We can now make an extra shadow for free once per rest cycle. We could have done this instead of playing the loss on [Call to the Abyss](#), but now we can do both. This is *huge*. Whenever we don't need to reposition shadows or ourselves, we should use this ability. The fact that we get an extra shadow here or there means that we're happier to spend shadows a bit more liberally for weaker abilities.

Yet another instance of movement and dark. This one turns us invisible; pair this with a fast initiative, and you'll be able to move into much riskier positions. Any deathwalker who is getting up close and personal will love this ability.

The top is a delayed loss for ten direct damage. It's always a bit scary to use this as the enemies might heal before this pops them, so use it sparingly. The best use case is against a high shield, moderate health enemy that doesn't have any self healing. Realistically, you probably won't use this until the scenario is almost over, because the bottom is so essential that it's typically not worth giving it up.

[Shadow Step](#): Pulled Across allows us to play much more aggressively now that we can be invisible when need be. We'd love to have Fleeting Dusk for the bottom but we just won't have time to come back for it.

[Puppetmaster](#): As we aren't getting up close and can't use invisibility well, Fleeting Dusk is the clear pick here, giving us an extra shadow per rest cycle that we can consume.

Level 5



Level five is where we really start to take off.

Just as [Ritual Sacrifice](#) was to [Strength of the Abyss](#), so too is Dominate to [Fluid Night](#). It is almost strictly better, with plus one damage and a chance to disarm, but not a huge amount better, and costs a dark instead of making one. 6 damage will kill often enough that we can frequently discount the disarm, and one extra damage isn't a major improvement. However, remember that [Fluid Night](#) is *busted* at level one, so we're beyond happy to just get a second copy that trades dark for damage. And if you are attacking some very tanky enemies, this disarm will do some fantastic work.

The bottom is yet *another* instance of move and darkness, this one being a bit longer range. It's easy to discount the power here, but this is our only other move 4 so far besides [Eclipse](#). That's not insignificant.

Medium gives us our first nonloss way to make shadows with a top action. An attack 3, boosted to 5 with dark, that generates a bonus shadow if it kills. That'll make two shadows with [Call to the Abyss](#), so this is a very efficient use of our time. The fact that we require the kill means you will want the dark to try and guarantee it, and if you have an ability to get advantage you'll want to use it here.

Meanwhile, the bottom action is *amazing*. If you were only ever moving one shadow at once, this lets you do it for free. This won't get your shadows from room to room, this won't line up your shadows into precise patterns, but if you just need one shadow in a certain place each round, this does it for you. This is absolutely an action worth losing a card for.

[Shadow Step](#): Medium lets us focus just on moving ourself and lets the loss take care of shifting shadows around. We can open scenarios with the top to jump-start our shadow economy, then play the bottom on our second cycle to accelerate even further.

[Puppetmaster](#): We would love Medium's bottom action, but Dominate is just too good to pass up. A powerful attack, a better way to make dark, and a powerful CC option make this the better choice.

Level 6



I'm a sucker for summons, so I love the top of The Night Takes Shape. This summon will probably live through two hits due to its disadvantage and decent health, and if you have your other summon, they both get the bonus. However, this summon doesn't hit harder or move further than your level one summon, and the cost of a second shadow does hurt. This is a great way to translate your shadows in a room into power in the next room (assuming you will be at an odd hand size if you pulled this card back), but not something that I would prioritize unless the shadows are going to waste anyway.

Besides, you'd then need to give up the bottom action, which is fantastic. We have seen some bottom sources of damage, but this is our first and only bottom attack, which *also* moves both us and a shadow. You don't need to use the teleport if you're already in the right spot, so this only costs a shadow if you need that part. Of course, if you are standing still, you'll need to hit hard enough that the enemy will reliably die, and you'll need to do it quickly.

Vengeful Storm is a clean upgrade to [Anger of the Dead](#). Attack three is an above average use for shadow consumption, and the tempo gained by this action is *huge*. Besides, you should be able to line up enough kills with this that you won't actually lose as many shadows as you spend; as with our other multitarget options, be sure to target the potential kills first for maximum shadows. You can't consume a shadow that you create to add additional targets, as you need to

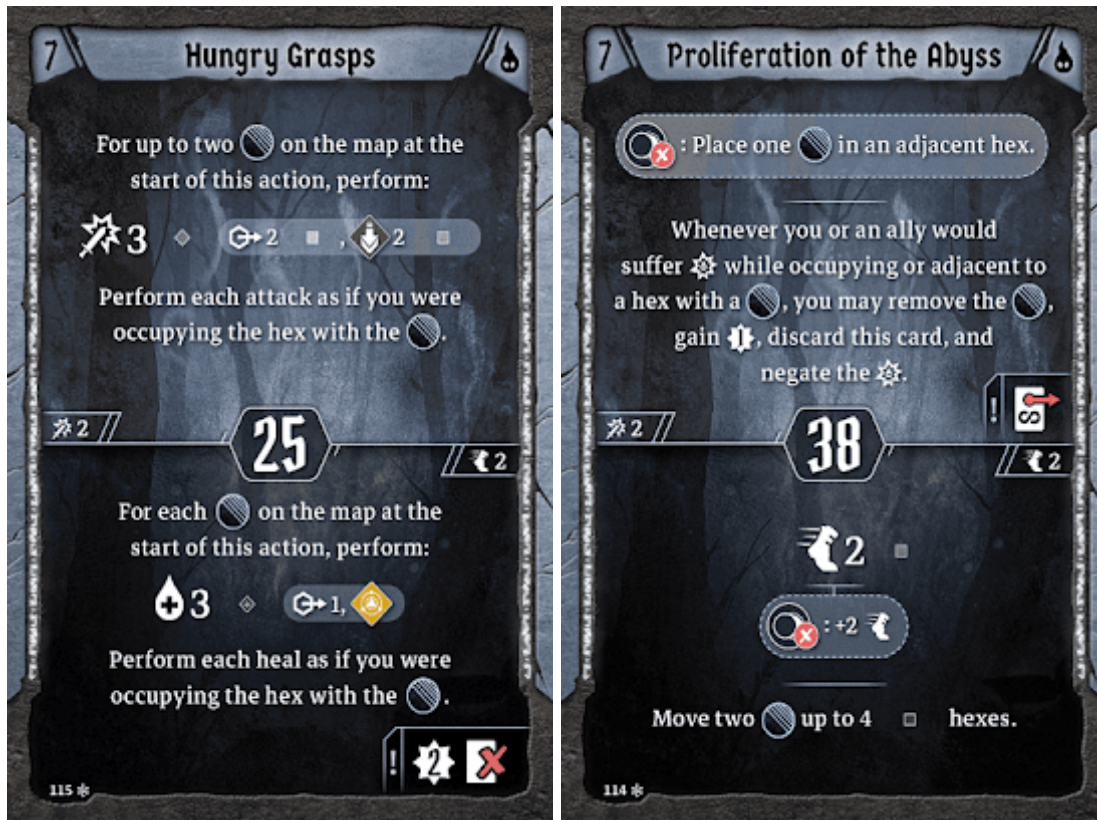
consume all targets before the start of the action, but six attack threes is an absolutely phenomenal use of your time.

We're never really going to want to give this up, but the loss on bottom can be phenomenal. Stun things in a large AOE and wound them, all but guaranteeing at least two direct damage each. The top is good enough that we don't want to give this up unless we're getting insane value, but if we can stun five or more enemies we're happy to pivot.

[Shadow Step](#): We would take The Night Takes Shape even if it was only an attack three on bottom. All the other text makes this choice easy.

[Puppetmaster](#): Vengeful Storm is the single most powerful card for this build.

Level 7



Hungry Grasps is a simple, effective action. It's a similar power level to [Fluid Night](#), but it hits two targets instead of one and doesn't cost us a shadow. The pull can be nice to get things into position for actions like [Deepening Despair](#), and if you're lucky, the first action kills a target, netting you two shadows.

The bottom action is definitely not something you build around, but if you can get off five heals and five blesses on characters that need them, this action does great work. I wouldn't use it unless you can get all five and remove a few conditions, as the stamina cost is definitely significant.

Proliferation of the Abyss' top action is a slight upgrade to Fluid Night. We can use it to protect an ally (near a shadow) instead of ourself, which makes this action great for a support build. And if you have dark, you get a spare shadow. It doesn't feel like enough of an upgrade to justify putting a level 1 action on the top of a level 7 card, so neither of our damaging builds will be using this in combat. Still, setting this up between rooms is a fine use of our time.

The bottom action is a strong upgrade to [Wave of Anguish](#), allowing us to reposition ourself and our shadows all at once. It's a shame we don't get XP for this darkness, but it's likely we'll be able to get value without the extra movement enough of the time.

[Shadow Step](#): We'll take Proliferation of the Abyss here. We badly need more to do with our darkness, and this provides two decent options, one to generate a shadow and one to put us in a stronger position.

[Puppetmaster](#): Hungry Graps is usually the best option. However, this isn't much better than our existing attacks, and we do actually have enough of them now that if we aren't getting value out of the pulls this is a mediocre choice. You could go back to levels 6 or 5 and take The Night Takes Shape if you really like summons, or Medium if you feel like you want to prioritize your bottom actions for things that aren't shadow movement (such as looting). In particular, I would recommend taking Medium if you took Restless Spirits back at level two, since that's something more to do on bottom.

Level 8



Frozen in Fear provides an absurd amount of crowd control. You can very quickly immobilize a huge group of monsters. The monsters then suffer one or two direct damage. Note that this targets all immobilized enemies, not just those you immobilized with this ability. Don't stress too much about the dark; you get the XP one way or the other, and the immobilize is typically more important than the damage here.

The bottom action lets us create and reposition shadows. At this point, we should be able to make enough shadows using our attacks, [Call to the Abyss](#), and nonloss shadow generation, but if we need a very high tempo opening to a scenario or to a new room, this card perfectly fits the bill. I'd recommend using this action in scenarios with lots of ranged enemies, so that giving up the immobilize isn't a huge cost.

The top of Lashing Tendrils is not a card you bring for yourself. If you have a strong, dedicated tank, such as a drifter or bannerspear, then this action can represent a huge amount of damage. I won't go into heavy detail builds that use the top half of this card, because they don't synergize with anything else we do. However, if you like supporting and you have such a tank, you can build around this and other support cards (such as [Proliferation of the Abyss](#), [Ritual Sacrifice](#), and [Rest in the Shade](#)).

For our purposes, the bottom is a strong, spamable action. Reposition your shadows, and get three or five damage as a bottom action. We typically want the shadows close to enemies

anyway, so we're often killing two birds with one stone here. Just be careful: since the damage is not an attack, it does not mark enemies to make shadows, so we usually want to use this on something we've already marked or something that won't die straightaway.

[Shadow Step](#): Frozen in Fear is the better option most of the time. If your party is very good at CC or doesn't mind taking hits, then you could consider taking Lashing Tendrils for the bottom, or even going back to level 4 for [Fleeting Dusk](#) if you find you want to lean a bit more into shadow consumption. However, being able to immobilize such a large area will be the best thing for us in most parties, especiall those with high player counts where this will hit lots of enemies.

[Puppetmaster](#): Lashing Tendrils is perfect, giving us something doubly productive to do on bottom.

Level 9



Black Lance represents an epic reward for careful shadow positioning. Theoretically, this represents attack 19, which is of course unparalleled for a nonloss action. Of course, this requires lining up five shadows, spending them all, and increasing the range of your movement with powerful boots not available early in the game. More realistically, this will be an attack ten or thirteen, which is still plenty! Three damage per shadow meets the same threshold as [Vengeful Storm](#) at level six, but piling it all into one attack makes us better at taking out bosses and tanky, shielded enemies.

When surrounded by a multitude of weak enemies, the top will probably be overkill, at which point we can use the bottom. Lining up 3-4 curses is extraordinarily powerful, and the fast initiative means you can ensure you get in there before the enemies declump. A fantastic capstone for deathwalkers that like to get up close and personal.

For those that like to stay back, When Your Time Comes is excellent. The top represents a fairly weak attack, followed by a huge amount of damage when the target dies. If you manage to kill the target, you get an immediate shadow from [Call to the Abyss](#), and you get the damage splash in what is hopefully an optimal location. If you don't kill the target (a much more likely outcome), you get a curse, which is not a small consolation.

On bottom, you get [Call to the Abyss](#) jr. It's hard to say whether this is better or worse on average. You don't need to attack to get these shadows, but you do need darkness, which is

something we could use for other effects. A support deathwalker could use only this bottom action and channel all of their dark into shadows. Realistically, a deathwalker that is attacking should be able to make enough shadows without this action, and will prefer the top of this card or one of the actions on Black Lance in order to use the shadows they're already making with greater efficiency. Still, between [Vengeful Storm](#) and [Anger of the Dead](#), we *could* run a build where we run this loss and [Call to the Abyss](#), and consume our shadows with absurd frequency.

[Shadow Step](#): We have an easy choice in Black Lance. This is a perfect reward for keeping our shadows in the right places, and a powerful bottom action when we don't want to eat them up.

[Puppetmaster](#): We'll take When Your Time Comes. The top and the bottom are both great choices for us, so you can't really go wrong with which action you prioritize. I would probably choose on a per-scenario basis which one to prioritize.

Shadow Step Build

Summary

The Shadow Step build lets the Deathwalker attack from melee range, empowering their abilities by standing in shadows. The goal of this build is to keep our shadow count as close to five as possible for the majority of the scenario, spending shadows only when we're at our cap, and moving in and out of the battle in order to make use of our powerful melee attacks.

There are a few reason why you might prefer the Shadow Step build for Deathwalker:

1. You enjoy high risk, high reward gameplay. This build will require a low HP character to get within melee range of monsters at high frequency. You can dish out absurd damage, but you need to put yourself in grave danger to pull it off.
2. You couldn't decide between this class and the blinkblade, and went with this class. This class will play much like a blinkblade in that they will need to initiative weave in order to have the highest success, and can occasionally abuse invisibility in order to stay in the fray longer. Your health is lower than a Blinkblade, so you will need to rely on these techniques even more if you value your life.

If your party has these things, the Shadow Step build will fit well:

- A strong frontline. This build runs almost no damage mitigation, so you *really* don't want to be taking more than one or two small hits a cycle. Since you will be up in the thick of it more often than not, you will be more successful if you have someone else who is trying to soak up some damage. Bannerspear, a defensive Drifter, or a Boneshaper making swarms of skeletons are all great allies for you.
- Friends with crowd control. We have little to no options for disabling our enemies, so that kind of assistance is very welcome. Geminata has lots of losses that fill this role for us.

[Level 1 Cards](#)

Core Level 1 Cards

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks



Movement and Utility



These are our cards that we will bring to every single scenario, until we gain a few levels and find stronger replacements. We'll be sorting cards into three major categories: attacks, movement/utility, and shadow management. Some cards will have the flexibility to be used in multiple roles; as these arise, we'll mark these in yellow.

In order for anything we do to make sense, we're going to need shadows. Every build will generate shadows using [Call to the Abyss](#), and most will rely on the top action in order to regularly generate shadows. We will want to play this on our first turn in most scenarios, although if the opening is particularly high pressure we can delay it until the second cycle and run [Eclipse](#) early instead. We can use [Wave of Anguish](#) to move shadows around when necessary, and [Eclipse](#) to drop extra shadows if there is a particularly high pressure situation. Until that arises, we're going to be very happy with [Eclipse](#)'s move 4.

We now have three powerful, short range attacks. [Strength of the Abyss](#) is the justification for why we consume shadows slowly, as we can get a nonloss attack six if we respect our shadow economy. [Shadow Step](#) is weaker, but has incredible initiative and lets us reposition on top, letting us run in and out in the same turn if the enemies are particularly threatening, or else move shadows into position on bottom. Finally, [Forceful Spirits](#) lets us hit a few enemies from range, which is useful for when enemies are low and we think we might be able to kill one enemy and kill or mark another.

Finally, we'll need to move ourself around more than simply [Eclipse](#) allows. Two move threes, with a nice bonus of poison and/or darkness, should get the job done most of the time.

Example Level One Hand

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks



Movement and Utility









We will need three additional cards to round out our build. Most of the time, [Fluid Night](#) will be a strong choice that allows us to spend our excess shadows, either as an additional strong attack on top or as a safety net on bottom. Be sure not to do this unless we're at or close to max shadows, or we are sacrificing power from [Strength of the Abyss](#). [Sunless Apparition](#) is nice as it's typically worth keeping around at least one teleport action that we don't want to attack with, and gives us a great way to spend shadows when we have a bit of a low pressure moment (or conversely, if it's too dangerous to go in for a round). This leaves us with one empty slot. I would typically bring either [Anger of the Dead](#) or [Dark Fog](#) to fill the final spot. [Anger of the Dead](#) is our fastest initiative, so even if we don't care much for the abilities we're often ok to simply play a very fast move two. 14 initiative beats both guards and archers at their fastest, and as these enemies are plentiful in the early game, this will probably save us a lost card at least once in a scenario. If you feel that another fast initiative isn't essential, [Dark Fog](#) will let us move one shadow up when we have nothing better to do. It also lets us line up Shadow Step more easily, although running up in the middle of the round can be very scary if we don't kill our target. The loss on [Dark Fog](#) is at least decent, although we will need to watch our stamina. You could even consider bringing both of these, at which point I would cut [Sunless Apparition](#). In scenarios where you don't anticipate teleporting much, that will likely be the strongest choice.

Openers

We'll start by listing out an example of what your first three turns might look like when starting a scenario. The action outlined is the one we'll use for initiative.

High Tempo

	Turn One	Turn Two	Turn Three
Top Action	 <p>Lingering Rot</p> <p>✱3 • all adjacent enemies, Perform the attacks as if you were occupying a hex with a ☹, then remove the ☹.</p> <p>2 // 64 2</p> <p>3 •</p> <p>1</p>	 <p>Eclipse</p> <p>Place three ☹ in hexes within ☹3.</p> <p>2 // 86 2</p> <p>4 •</p>	 <p>Forceful Spirits</p> <p>✱2 • ☹2 ☹+2</p> <p>☹+1 ☹</p> <p>2 // 34 2</p> <p>☹ to a hex with ☹ or adjacent to a ☹.</p>
Bottom Action	 <p>Call to the Abyss</p> <p>During your and your summons' attacks, before drawing an attack modifier card, you may place one character token on the target of the attack. When that enemy dies, place one ☹ in or adjacent to the hex it occupied.</p> <p>Whenever you place a character token with this ability, remove any other character token placed with this ability.</p> <p>2 // 82 2</p> <p>Place one ☹ in a hex within ☹2.</p>	 <p>Fluid Night</p> <p>✱5 • Perform the attack as if you were occupying a hex with a ☹, then remove the ☹.</p> <p>2 // 24 2</p> <p>Whenever you would suffer ☹, you may instead ☹ to a hex with a ☹, remove the ☹, negate the ☹, and discard this card.</p>	 <p>Wave of Anguish</p> <p>For each ☹ on the map at the start of this action, perform:</p> <p>✱3 Perform each attack as if you were occupying the hex with the ☹.</p> <p>2 // 58 2</p> <p>☹2 •</p> <p>Move all ☹ up to 1 ☹ hex.</p>

This isn't the ideal opener, but if our team needs us to have some impact immediately, this is the way we can provide some. We use [Call to the Abyss](#) bottom late, allowing enemies to first approach, and immediately spend that shadow on [Lingering Rot](#), in order to damage and poison whatever threat is staring us down. The following round, we create some shadows with [Eclipse](#), make some darkness, and use [Fluid Night](#) to defend ourself if something goes wrong. On the

third turn, we can use [Forceful Spirits](#) to hit decently hard, hopefully killing one or two enemies. This leaves us with 2-3 shadows, and we can move the following turn to get an attack 3-4 with [Shadow Step](#) or [Strength of the Abyss](#). It's not ideal, as we are likely losing out on shadows long term without marking things with [Call to the Abyss](#). However, we can still remain relatively powerful as we can avoid spending shadows and maintain our count of three until we have time to properly put up [Call to the Abyss](#) later on. If it seems like it's going to be a very long scenario and you still feel pressured to perform this style of opening, you can continue to use [Call to the Abyss](#)' bottom action for a few cycles. It'll slow you down both in terms of movement and shadow tempo, but it will keep you alive for longer, which is sometimes more important. This opening is significantly strengthened if you can reclaim [Call to the Abyss](#) using an item similar to Gloomhaven's stamina potion and replace the second turn cards with [Call to the Abyss](#) and [Call of Doom](#), and then gain two shadows with [Forceful Spirits](#). Being down one shadow but having [Call to the Abyss](#) active is a massive improvement for us, so if you do find this kind of item, be sure to fight very hard for it.

Low Tempo

	Turn One	Turn Two	Turn Three
Top Action	 <p>Call to the Abyss</p> <p>During your and your summons' attacks, before drawing an attack modifier card, you may place one character token on the target of the attack. When that enemy dies, place one in or adjacent to the hex it occupied.</p> <p>Whenever you place a character token with this ability, remove any other character token placed with this ability.</p> <p>2 // 82 // 2</p> <p>Place one in a hex within 2.</p>	 <p>Forceful Spirits</p> <p>2 2 2 2</p> <p>34</p> <p>2 to a hex with or adjacent to a.</p>	 <p>Shadow Step</p> <p>3</p> <p>This movement must end in a hex with a.</p> <p>3</p> <p>2 // 19 // 2</p> <p>6</p> <p>Place one in the hex you are occupying.</p>

Bottom Action			
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If we can afford one full turn of setting up, this is a powerful option. We set up [Call to the Abyss](#) and make our darkness one turn earlier than the other build, but don't contribute anything to dealing with the impending threat until the second round. If we can pick up two shadows with [Forceful Spirits](#), then a third with [Shadow Step](#) the following round, then we've gotten [Strength of the Abyss](#) up to a respectable level. We'll try not to spend any shadows unless we would take damage; if that looks likely, find a turn to set up [Fluid Night](#), which we can leave up while resting as we'll be at nine cards after our rest, so it won't cost us a turn. We can plan to use [Fluid Night](#) as an attack later in the scenario once we've hit five shadows and it won't cost us nearly as much.

Strategy for Leveling

As we level, we will always be focusing on a few things: powerful melee attacks; safer ways to position ourselves; and more efficient ways to move our shadows around. We will want to rapidly pick up the “enemies gain disadvantage while we stand in shadows” perk, but even with this, we don’t want to frequently take hits, so we want to focus on initiative weaving, invisibility, and slow positioning behind our tanks whenever possible. We will need to choose cards that validate these choices.

Level 2 Level-up Choice

Level 2 Hand

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks



Movement and Utility



Restless Spirits gives us a more efficient way to spend a shadow, and lets us use [Fluid Night](#) more frequently for its bottom safety net; still, in situations where we have lots of excess shadows and want to prioritize damage over our own safety, we can run Fluid Night on top and Restless Spirits on bottom. Either way, this spends two shadows per cycle, which is about what we're looking for at this point in our build (after we've hit our maximum, of course). We now have 4-5 reliable attacks, and a few strong ways to consume shadows once we hit our stride. Consider bringing back [Anger of the Dead](#) in place of [Sunless Apparition](#) against enemies with very fast and threatening attacks, as sometimes all you need is a move two at very fast initiative.

Level 3 Level-up Choice

Level 3 Hand

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks



Movement and Utility



Ritual Sacrifice offers us an incredibly fast initiative attached to our core element, which also provides the potential for a very powerful attack if we can ever find the time to line up our shadows properly (something we aren't actively prioritizing at this stage). We probably aren't trying to summon anymore, and this provides the initiative we needed, so we can cut whichever of [Sunless Apparition](#) or [Anger of the Dead](#) we were leaning on.

Level 4 Level-up Choice

Level 4 Hand

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks



Movement and Utility



Pulled Across lets us play much more riskily, moving in early to turn invisible and then moving out late (perhaps with [Eclipse](#) or [Lingering Rot](#)) the following round. It's a fairly clean upgrade to [Call of Doom](#), as we now have two ways to make darkness on a move (and really only one way we want to be consuming it anyway). I would recommend bringing back [Call of Doom](#) in place of [Fluid Night](#) or [Shadow Step](#) in scenarios with particularly high movement demands, as a single move 4 and move 3 might not cut it. That being said, we do have teleports and a top move to get us out of sticky situation, so we can often get by with this build.

Level 5 Level-up Choice

Level 5 Hand

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks



Movement and Utility









Medium is perhaps our single largest power shift at any level. With the ability to move a shadow for free each turn, we can more easily get off effects such as [Restless Spirits](#), and we actually have a chance of lining up a strong [Ritual Sacrifice](#) attack. We'll cut [Shadow Step](#), as [Ritual Sacrifice](#) fits the "basic attack on a fast initiative" role more appropriately at this stage, and as we don't really need the top movement now that we don't need to focus our bottom actions on manipulation shadows as frequently. For a similar reason, [Restless Spirits](#) will now always be an attack for us, leaving [Fluid Night](#) open to be a get-out-of-jail-free card.

Mid-Build Reflection

We've now got at minimum four perks, plus likely 2-3 more from battle goals and other sources. More importantly, we have [Medium](#) available to let us position shadows more freely and access our strongest abilities. However, we probably use [Medium](#)'s top action rather than its loss in the first cycle. Most of the shadows we'll be making will be next to enemies, which is where we want them anyway, and we can make small adjustments with [Wave of Anguish](#) as needed. It's more important to run a big attack and make extra shadows than to reposition the very few shadows we'll obtain in our first volley.

Low Tempo opener using [Medium](#)





































	Turn One	Turn Two	Turn Three
Top Action	 <p>Call to the Abyss</p> <p>During your and your summons' attacks, before drawing an attack modifier card, you may place one character token on the target of the attack. When that enemy dies, place one in or adjacent to the hex it occupied.</p> <p>Whenever you place a character token with this ability, remove any other character token placed with this ability.</p> <p>2 // 82</p> <p>Place one in a hex within 2.</p>	 <p>Medium</p> <p>3</p> <p>2</p> <p>If this attack kills an enemy, place one in a hex adjacent to the hex the killed enemy occupied.</p> <p>2 // 55</p> <p>At the start of each of your turns, move one up to 3 hexes.</p>	 <p>Forceful Spirits</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p> <p>2</p> <p>2 // 34</p> <p>to a hex with or adjacent to a.</p>
Bottom Action	 <p>Ritual Sacrifice</p> <p>3</p> <p>3</p> <p>Add +1 for each in or adjacent to the hex occupied by the target.</p> <p>2 // 13</p> <p>Remove any number of within 1. For each removed, gain and grant one ally or self.</p> <p>1</p> <p>2</p>	 <p>Pulled Across</p> <p>1</p> <p>one normal or elite enemy occupying a hex with a</p> <p>2 // 77</p> <p>2</p> <p>self</p>	 <p>Eclipse</p> <p>1</p> <p>Place three in hexes within 1.</p> <p>2 // 86</p> <p>4</p>

We'll still set up [Call to the Abyss](#) immediately, pairing it with [Ritual Sacrifice](#) for the darkness. On the following turn, we move in slowly and use [Medium](#) to kill an enemy, generating two shadows. Turn three lets us make 1-2 more with [Forceful Spirits](#), and by turn 4 we've got

[Strength of the Abyss](#) to a very respectable power level. We can set up [Medium](#) after we rest once or twice, and then take the time to push our shadows forward.

Let's focus on what it might look like when we're entering a new room. Ideally we'll have our tank open the door for us, and we'll be positioned as close to the doorway as possible. We'll have both [Call to the Abyss](#) and [Medium](#) set up, and we'll have at least 4 shadows from the previous room, with at least one close to the door.

New Room Opener

	Turn One	Turn Two	Turn Three
Top Action	 <p>Strength of the Abyss</p> <p>$\text{X}+1$ where X is the number of  on the map.</p> <p>50</p> <p>Once during each of your move or attack abilities, you may remove one  within $\text{G}+3$ to gain  and add $+2$  to your move ability or $+2$  to one of your attacks.</p>	 <p>Restless Spirits</p> <p>$\text{X}+3$  </p> <p>If you are occupying a hex with a , you may remove it: $+3$  .</p> <p>20</p> <p>Move one  up to 4  hexes.</p> <p>If the moved  is in the same hex as an enemy, that enemy suffers $\text{X}+3$, remove the , and gain .</p>	 <p>Forceful Spirits</p> <p>$\text{X}+2$   $\text{G}+2$</p> <p>$+1$  </p> <p>34</p> <p>to a hex with a  or adjacent to a .</p>
Bottom Action	 <p>Lingering Rot</p> <p>$\text{X}+3$  all adjacent enemies.</p> <p>Perform the attacks as if you were occupying a hex with a , then remove the .</p> <p>64</p> <p>$\text{X}+3$ </p> <p>$\text{G}+1$</p>	 <p>Pulled Across</p> <p> one normal or elite enemy occupying a hex with a .</p> <p>77</p> <p>$\text{X}+2$ </p> <p>self</p>	 <p>Eclipse</p> <p>Place three  in hexes within $\text{G}+3$.</p> <p>86</p> <p>$\text{X}+4$ </p>

We enter the room slowly, hitting hard with [Strength of the Abyss](#) on a poisoned target. The following turn, we move quickly (using [Ritual Sacrifice](#) on top instead if we think we need an incredibly fast initiative to survive), then hit again and turn invisible. The following turn, moving slowly to maximize our time out of sight, we use our dark to clean up with [Forceful Spirits](#). At this

point we should have enough shadows nearby (new ones from kills and old ones moved in with [Medium](#)) that we can line up [Ritual Sacrifice](#) if we have another turn before resting; if not, we can use [Eclipse](#)'s movement to rush away, long rest while we move even more shadows into position, and then begin the next cycle with [Ritual Sacrifice](#) and [Pulled Across](#) to wipe out whatever didn't survive our first wave.

Level 6 Level-up Choice

Level 6 Hand

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks



Movement and Utility



The Night Takes Shape gives us another way to use up shadows, which is probably for the best as we are likely generating enough that we can afford to spend a third one most cycles. In any case, it's our one and only bottom attack, which we'll want to use each and every cycle. I would cut [Wave of Anguish](#) here, as [Medium](#) plus The Night Takes Shape should be handling all of our shadow movement, but if you feel like you still need a little bit of extra shadow positioning you can cut [Lingering Rot](#) or [Eclipse](#) instead; this desirable teleport means we can get away with one fewer big move.

Level 7 Level-up Choice

Level 7 Hand

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks



Movement and Utility



Proliferation of the Abyss *finally* gives us another valid use for our darkness, no matter which half we use. Both of these actions are incredibly valuable, and I would choose on a per-scenario basis which one you think you'll be emphasizing. If you're using the bottom, then we don't need [Lingering Rot](#) and [Eclipse](#), so I would cut whichever of those you like least. If you're using the top, then [Fluid Night](#) is completely redundant, so that's the cut. We can rearrange all of these options as needed, but I think for a standard three room scenario I would typically cut [Fluid Night](#) by default.

Level 8 Level-up Choice

Level 8 Hand

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks



Movement and Utility



Frozen in Fear provides something we don't really have much of in this class: crowd control. We can use this in scenarios with lots of melee enemies when we don't really feel safe going in, although most of the time we should be able to figure out a way to survive with invisibility. This isn't really for our own safety, but that of our team. Since the bottom provides an emergency shadow drop, we shouldn't really need [Eclipse](#) anymore. We have enough burst movement for fighting, and if we anticipate a long journey between battles, we have two teleport options to move us forward.

Level 9 Level-up Choice

Level 9 Hand

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks

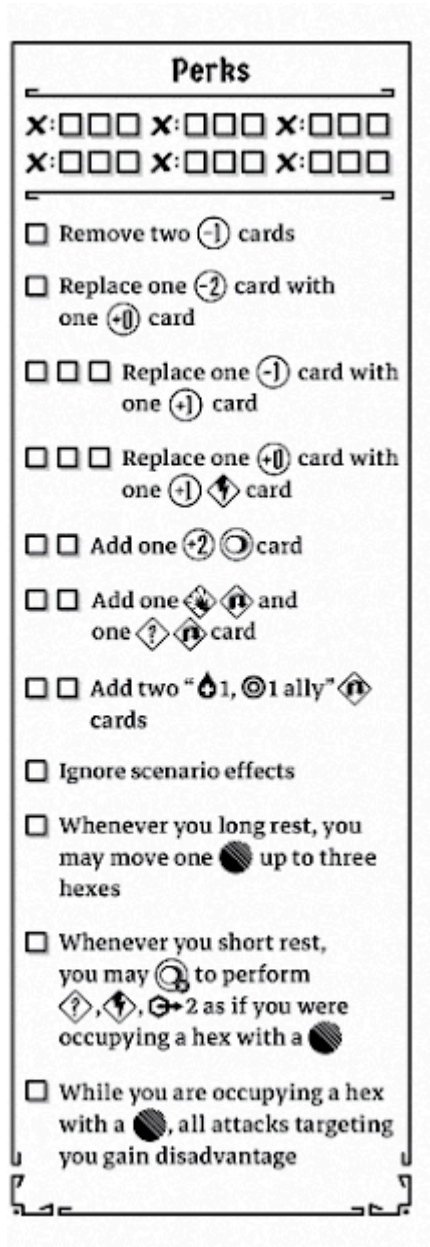


Movement and Utility



[Forceful Spirits](#) was doing great things for us, but the main benefit was generating two shadows from one turn by killing one of the targets. Realistically the enemies are high enough level at this point that we aren't getting two kills with this action as frequently, and we have [Proliferation of the Abyss](#) to make us a spare shadow on occasion, so this is less essential for us now. Pair that with the fact that [Frozen in Fear](#) gives us another option for dark consumption, and we're perfectly happy to let this one go. We'll use Black Lance as our strongest attack by far, though we can use the bottom in a pinch.

Perks



1. We want to reliably kill so that we are leaving around shadows more frequently than marks. We'll cut the (-2) immediately so that we can rely on a (-1) or better to kill if we don't miss.

2. Our next perk should be the non-AMD that forces enemies attacking us while in shadows to gain disadvantage. Without this benefit, we won't be able to take any risks early on and this build would be much too dangerous.

3. We now go back for even more consistency. Remove 2 (-1)s and replace the rest with (+1)s so we know we can rely on dealing at least as much damage as our attacks say.

4. These are all the perks we *really* need, so everything else is gravy. I would ignore scenario effects next, so that we don't put negatives back into our deck.

5. Upgrade the (0)s into (+1, curse) cards. It's very unlikely that the curse matters (we are killing most of the time anyway), but the value is important and the curse will be a good consolation prize if we aren't getting some kills.

6. By now, you should know whether you'll be long or short resting more. Both are very valuable for us, so pick the perk that goes with your typical resting style and take the other one very last.

7. We can put in the rolling modifiers based on what your team needs. We're aiming to kill with most hits, so we usually prioritize the rolling heals because those still work if you land a killing blow, but disarm and muddle are fantastic for tanky enemies or when things go wrong.

8. We barely have any use for dark. Still, a (+2) is a (+2), so we'll grab these over doing nothing.

Enhancements

Early game, the best thing we can do is enhance our movements, as we have such a small number of large movements. [Wave of Anguish](#) is a quality option as we can increase the move speed of us and our shadows if we're willing to shell out the cash. I would also consider [Lingering Rot](#), so that we don't have to rely on [Eclipse](#) as much. [Shadow Step](#) is the only level one attack we can really get value from enhancing; I would probably just put a +1, as securing kills is quite important to us, but wound is also fine. [Restless Spirits](#) is also an excellent option; it's not that much more expensive at level two, and it's an attack we're very happy to use. I like wound here, as keeping the attack value low (if six can be called low) secures us the curse, and yet still does additional damage in order to get us the shadow shortly after.

Puppetmaster Build

Summary

The Puppetmaster build focuses on the Deathwalker's ability to attack from afar, and consume shadows in bulk for additional, powerful effects. This build has a higher emphasis on dark consumption, lower focus on keeping our shadow count high, and puts us in much less physical danger.

There are a few reason why you might prefer the Puppetmaster build for Deathwalker:

1. You don't enjoy getting in close with your low health pool. This build will take *far* fewer hits overall than the other build, so you aren't risking losing cards due to your low health pool. If you're doing your job right, you shouldn't really take any hits that you don't want to.
2. You like resource management. This build has to determine when and how to spend their shadows, and makes liberal use of dark with their abilities. You'll need to manage both pools of resources in order to maximize your impact.
3. You like big, bursty turns. A few times each scenario, you'll be able to spend a huge chunk of shadows for value that would otherwise be lost.

If your party has these things, the Puppetmaster build will fit well:

- A crowded frontline. Your shadows will weave around the enemies, but they don't block movement, so you'll never be in the way. Melee classes and summon classes in high player count parties will like that you can stand *very* far back.
- Low damage and high crowd control. You deal a ton of damage but don't really have good ways to lock enemies down, so if others can hold them still you'll be able to take them out.
- Additional payoff for curse. This build does a lot of damage, but in smaller, more spaced out instances, so it's more likely that you'll be able to apply curse here. If you have a party that benefits from this, such as a Critical Failure Boneshaper, then this is the way you can help them the most.

[Level 1 Cards](#)

Core Level 1 Cards

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks



Movement and Utility



These are our cards that we will bring to every single scenario, until we gain a few levels and find stronger replacements. We'll be sorting cards into three major categories: attacks, movement/utility, and shadow management. Some cards will have the flexibility to be used in multiple roles; as these arise, we'll mark these in yellow.

In order for anything we do to make sense, we're going to need shadows. Every build will generate shadows using [Call to the Abyss](#), and most will rely on the top action in order to regularly generate shadows. We will want to play this on our first turn in most scenarios, although if the opening is particularly high pressure we can delay it until the second cycle and run [Eclipse](#) early instead. We don't care much about moving ourselves, so we rely on [Dark Fog](#) and [Black Barrage](#) to move our shadows around. [Dark Fog](#) is more important early, as it's difficult for us to move our shadows from room to room and we don't really need more than one or two in position at once anyway. As a result, we can use [Black Barrage](#) as an attack when necessary.

[Fluid Night](#) and [Forceful Spirits](#) are our best attacks by a wide margin. We shouldn't ever be in danger, so we won't need the bottom of [Fluid Night](#). [Forceful Spirits](#) does require us to get reasonably close to the fight but we should be able to coordinate so either our tank secures our safety, or else we kill the enemies in question. [Anger of the Dead](#) serves as our way to convert excess shadows into value before we have the cards to move them to the next room, as well as a great source of XP. When used on a shielded enemy, we're getting good value for our shadows.

We'll bring [Call of Doom](#) as dark generation, which we need more badly as we level up, but is still strong for [Forceful Spirits](#) now. [Sunless Apparition](#) is essential to teleport us ahead, and we're very happy to create the summon if we know we won't be moving to the next room before we rest.

Example Level One Hand

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks



Movement and Utility









We are two cards short of a full build now. There's not *really* anything else we want, but there are two cards that we *cannot* use ([Strength of the Abyss](#) and [Shadow Step](#)), so we only have to cut one more card. This will usually be [Rest in Shade](#); the other cards don't really offer things we need, but their nonloss actions are fine and we do very much like the loss actions they provide. It is tempting to use lots of losses on this class, as [Lingering Rot](#), [Dark Fog](#), and [Wave of Anguish](#) all provide very big bursts of damage. However, we cannot get away with skipping [Call to the Abyss](#) on this build, and as a result we *absolutely* need to watch our stamina. This means you should drop [Wave of Anguish](#) or [Lingering Rot](#) on your first rest, and probably drop the other on your second. However, you can usually afford to play one additional loss to [Call to the Abyss](#) in the middle of a scenario, so if you don't need [Eclipse](#) and you feel like [Dark Fog](#)'s bottom is too important, you can keep around whichever you prefer to drop on the round when you're at eight or six cards.

Openers

We'll start by listing out an example of what your first three turns might look like when starting a scenario. The action outlined is the one we'll use for initiative.





















































High Tempo

	Turn One	Turn Two	Turn Three
Top Action			
Bottom Action			

This isn't the ideal opener, but if our team needs us to have some impact immediately, this is the way we can provide some. We *absolutely* cannot skip setting up [Call to the Abyss](#) on our first cycle; we consume shadows too rapidly to wait. However, we can get away with dropping [Eclipse](#) first and having 1-2 turns of value before setting it up on the back half of cycle one. Drop three shadows under enemies and activate [Anger of the Dead](#), hopefully in such a way that

additional enemies will run through these shadows and you'll get off 4-5 wounds, 3 of which tick instantly. The following turn, use one of these shadows with [Fluid Night](#) to kill a key target. If you have time, set up [Call to the Abyss](#) here and use [Call of Doom](#) to make darkness, and delay the attack for another round; if not, you can set up [Call to the Abyss](#) afterwards. We could get away with using [Call to the Abyss](#)'s bottom action turn one if we had a way to reclaim it (such as a stamina potion from Gloomhaven) and then put it up on the second or third turn. One way to do this is to summon immediately, then put up [Call to the Abyss](#), and then attack on turn three. This would be a moderate tempo opening where you delay yourself by one turn but get a summon out, and don't sacrifice too much in terms of shadows.

Low Tempo

	Turn One	Turn Two	Turn Three
Top Action	 <p>Call to the Abyss</p> <p>During your and your summons' attacks, before drawing an attack modifier card, you may place one character token on the target of the attack when that enemy dies, place one  in or adjacent to the hex it occupied.</p> <p>Whenever you place a character token with this ability, remove any other character token placed with this ability.</p> <p> 2 // 82  2</p> <p>Place one  in a hex within  2.</p>	 <p>Forceful Spirits</p> <p> 2  2  2</p> <p> 1  2</p> <p> 2 // 34  2</p> <p> to a hex with a  or adjacent to a .</p>	 <p>Fluid Night</p> <p> 5</p> <p>Perform the attack as if you were occupying a hex with a , then remove the .</p> <p> 2 // 24  2</p> <p>Whenever you would suffer , you may instead  to a hex with a , then remove the , negate the , and discard this card.</p>
Bottom Action	 <p>Call of Doom</p> <p> 1  all adjacent enemies</p> <p>Perform the attack as if you were occupying a hex with a .</p> <p> 2 // 32  2</p> <p> 3</p> <p></p>	 <p>Lingering Rot</p> <p> 3  all adjacent enemies</p> <p>Perform the attack as if you were occupying a hex with a , then remove the .</p> <p> 2 // 64  2</p> <p> 3</p> <p>  1</p>	 <p>Eclipse</p> <p>Place three  in hexes within  3.</p> <p> 2 // 86  2</p> <p> 4</p>

If we can afford one full turn of setting up, this is a powerful option. We set up [Call to the Abyss](#) and make our darkness one turn earlier than the other build, but don't contribute anything to dealing with the impending threat until the second round. Turn two our goal is to kill one target and mark another, giving us one shadow immediately and one on deck. Best case scenario, someone else kills our marked target before we go on round three, and if we get a kill with [Fluid Night](#) then we have two shadows to work with at this point, which is all we'll really ever need at once.

Remember to leave no shadow behind. At the end of a room, you have two choices: try to move all of your shadows to the next room, or consume them all to avoid losing value (both damage and experience). Moving them all is slow for us now as we can only move one shadow more than 3 hexes for the entire rest cycle, so unless they're already near the doorway I'd go the other route until we're higher level. We can consume all of our shadows with [Anger of the Dead](#) for a huge chunk of XP, potentially summoning as well with [Sunless Apparition](#) if we have the time and the right hand size. It's often worth leaving behind one shadow, pushing it forwards with [Dark Fog](#), and then either using it for [Fluid Night](#) or teleporting to it when you need to advance.

Strategy for Leveling

As we level, we will always be focusing on a few things: strong attacks from a distance, more efficient ways to consume shadows, and more efficient ways to move shadows. Early on, our priority will be attacking, as we have lots of decent shadow options, but only two attacks that we're really happy to spam right now.

Level 2 Level-up Choice

Level 2 Hand

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks



Movement and Utility



Deepening Despair provides another attack that we're very happy to use. It isn't as powerful as our other attacks, but it doesn't eat shadows and doesn't put us in danger, and it has an absurdly fast initiative. We'll cut [Wave of Anguish](#), as we rarely need to move ourself and our shadows at the same time, and relegate [Black Barrage](#) to near-permanent shadow management.

Level 3 Level-up Choice

Level 3 Hand

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks



Movement and Utility



Dead Bolt is a fine attack (with darkness) and our best Shadow movement option. With it, we actually have a chance to move our shadows between rooms, especially if we can use it, rest, and then use it again. Now that we won't be leaving as many shadows behind, dropping [Eclipse](#) in the second room is less exciting for us. Still, we never really want to be next to enemies, so we'll prefer it over [Lingering Rot](#) as a generic movement option that we can drop as a loss if absolutely necessary.

Level 4 Level-up Choice

Level 4 Hand

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks









Movement and Utility



This is by far our biggest power spike yet; being able to create shadows on the fly will revolutionize our scenario openers and give us something great to do when we don't need to move ourself or our shadows. We're basically never playing [Eclipse](#)'s top action anymore, but it's still something we can drop in the last room for some free XP with Anger of the Dead, and our best movement option when we don't need to teleport. As a result, I'd typically cut [Black Barrage](#) here; however, if you know you won't be walking very much, then you can instead cut [Eclipse](#), shift [Black Barrage](#) to an attack, and play [Forceful Spirits](#) as a teleport. [Forceful Spirits](#) is really the only reason we're bothering to position ourself anymore, so if you aren't using that then two teleports a cycle should be more than enough. The main reason we haven't made this choice already is that teleporting instead of moving means we'll be very loot poor, so walking around every now and again will find us the resources we need.

Mid-Build Reflection

We've now got at minimum three perks, plus likely 2-3 more from battle goals and other sources. More importantly, we have [Fleeting Dusk](#) available to let us create a shadow in our spare time. This drastically improves our options for starting the scenario:

	Turn One	Turn Two	Turn Three
Top Action	 <p>Call to the Abyss</p> <p>During your and your summons' attacks, before drawing an attack modifier card, you may place one character token on the target of the attack. When that enemy dies, place one in or adjacent to the hex it occupied.</p> <p>Whenever you place a character token with this ability, remove any other character token placed with this ability.</p> <p>82</p> <p>Place one in a hex within 2.</p>	 <p>Fluid Night</p> <p>5</p> <p>Perform the attack as if you were occupying a hex with a, then remove the.</p> <p>24</p> <p>Whenever you would suffer, you may instead to a hex with a remove the, negate the, and discard this card.</p>	 <p>Forceful Spirits</p> <p>2</p> <p>Perform the attack as if you were occupying a hex with a, then remove the.</p> <p>34</p> <p>to a hex with or adjacent to a.</p>
Bottom Action	 <p>Fleeting Dusk</p> <p>3</p> <p>Perform the attacks as if you were occupying a hex with a.</p> <p>36</p> <p>Place one in an adjacent hex.</p>	 <p>Dark Fog</p> <p>3</p> <p>Perform the attacks as if you were occupying a hex with a.</p> <p>46</p> <p>Move one up to 5 hexes.</p>	 <p>Eclipse</p> <p>Place three in hexes within 3.</p> <p>86</p> <p>4</p>

On the first round, we'll still set up [Call to the Abyss](#), but we'll create a shadow instead of darkness. This sets us up to shove the shadow at our most likely kill, then take it out, going shadow neutral. The following round, we use the dark and [Forceful Spirits](#) to get two more kills, bringing us up to three shadows. We can use these shadows for a respectable [Anger of the Dead](#), or save them for the next room.

Level 5 Level-up Choice

Level 5 Hand

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks



Movement and Utility



Dominate is an easy replacement for [Eclipse](#). The top is much stronger, the bottom makes us dark, and since we aren't frequently putting ourself in danger, we'd rather have another kinda-fast initiative than a very slow one.

Level 6 Level-up Choice

Level 6 Hand

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks



Movement and Utility



Vengeful Storm is our biggest power spike at any level. Our baseline for shadow consumption is now three attack, and we should never settle for less. It's an easy replacement for [Anger of the Dead](#); this was really only ever for XP and occasionally shielded enemies, and if we really need to deal with shields we have several large attacks that will decently get the job done. That being said, if you encounter a scenario with enemies that have 3+ innate shield, [Anger of the Dead](#) is still worth swapping back in for one of your other utility options on a per-scenario basis.

Level 7 Level-up Choice

Shadow Management

The image displays four cards from the game, each with a unique theme and mechanics:

- Fluid Night (Card 1):** Features a dark, watery background. The top left corner has a '1' in a circle. The title 'Fluid Night' is at the top. The card has a cost of 5 (indicated by a star and the number 5). The text reads: 'Perform the attack as if you were occupying a hex with a [Water] token, then remove the [Water] token.' The bottom left shows a '2' in a circle. The bottom center has a large number '24'. The bottom right has a '2' in a circle. The bottom left corner has a small icon of a water drop.
- Deepening Despair (Card 2):** Features a dark, stormy background. The top left corner has a '2' in a circle. The title 'Deepening Despair' is at the top. The card has a cost of 4 (indicated by a star and the number 4). The text reads: 'Spend 1 energy at any [Water] adjacent to at least two [Water] tokens.' The bottom left shows a '2' in a circle. The bottom center has a large number '11'. The bottom right has a '2' in a circle. The bottom left corner has a small icon of a water drop.
- Vengeful Storm (Card 6):** Features a dark, stormy background. The top left corner has a '6' in a circle. The title 'Vengeful Storm' is at the top. The card has a cost of 3 (indicated by a star and the number 3) and a bonus of 4 (indicated by a plus sign and the number 4). The text reads: 'Remove any number of [Water] tokens within 2 of yourself. For each [Water] removed: -1 [Water] token.' The bottom left shows a '2' in a circle. The bottom center has a large number '18'. The bottom right has a '2' in a circle. The bottom left corner has a small icon of a water drop.
- Hungry Grasps (Card 7):** Features a dark, stormy background. The top left corner has a '7' in a circle. The title 'Hungry Grasps' is at the top. The card has a cost of 3 (indicated by a star and the number 3) and a bonus of 2 (indicated by a plus sign and the number 2). The text reads: 'For up to two [Water] tokens on the map at the start of this action, perform: [Water] token: -1 [Water] token. Perform each attack as if you were occupying the hex with the [Water] token.' The bottom left shows a '2' in a circle. The bottom center has a large number '25'. The bottom right has a '2' in a circle. The bottom left corner has a small icon of a water drop.

The image displays three game cards from the 'Call of Doom' set, arranged side-by-side. Each card features a dark, textured background with a central figure and various game mechanics.

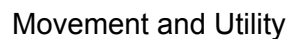
- Call of Doom:** The card has a cost of 1 and a power of 32. It includes an ability that allows the player to attack all adjacent enemies. The card also features a 'Call of Doom' icon and a 'Call of Doom' text box.
- Dominate:** The card has a cost of 5 and a power of 29. It includes an ability that allows the player to perform the attack as if they were occupying the hex with a specific icon, then remove the icon. The card also features a 'Dominate' icon and a 'Dominate' text box.
- Forceful Spirits:** The card has a cost of 2 and a power of 34. It includes an ability that allows the player to move to a hex with a specific icon or adjacent to a specific icon. The card also features a 'Forceful Spirits' icon and a 'Forceful Spirits' text box.

Hungry Grasps does exactly the same thing as [Forceful Spirits](#), except it doesn't require us to position ourself or to consume dark. Still, [Forceful Spirits](#) is a powerful attack and our best teleport, so we'll cut [Sunless Apparition](#) instead. Now that we have [Vengeful Storm](#), we don't really need the summon to find high value from our shadows; it is slightly better than one extra attack three, but not enough extra to cost us a whole extra turn.

If you really like summons, and you know that your party won't care about the pulls in general, then you can instead go back here for [The Night Takes Shape](#) and run a bit of a summon build. We don't really have the tools to keep our summons alive, but spamming curses combined with disadvantage on both summons can be strong. If you are starting this class at high enough level that you'll have both summons for quite some time, you can also pick [Restless Spirits](#) at level two and just work to maximize your curses. This probably won't be better than simply spamming attacks, but it's something you can do if you want to try something different.

Level 8 Level-up Choice

Shadow Management



Lashing Tendrils is an extraordinarily powerful bottom option for us. Five direct damage on bottom and another great use for darkness, while advancing our shadows, is exactly what we need here. Most of the time this is a pretty clear replacement for [Dark Fog](#); the loss is a bit less exciting now that we have [Vengeful Storm](#), and we have enough ways to keep our shadows moving that we aren't as excited to just move one at a time. That being said, if the scenario has a huge distance to traverse, cut [Call of Doom](#) instead (if you haven't enhanced it yet) or [Fluid Night](#) (if Call is enhanced) so that you can shove one shadow as far forwards as possible.

Level 9 Level-up Choice

Level 9 Hand

Shadow Management



Standard Attacks



Movement and Utility















What to cut here depends very much on whether you want to use the top or the bottom of When Your Time Comes. The top is a decent attack in an AOE, which is what [Call of Doom](#) does, so we can make the upgrade. A move three that makes dark is starting to be mediocre, so we'll let it go. Conversely, if you've decided you prefer to use the bottom of When Your Time Comes, we won't need as much shadow management since we'll be spamming new shadows fairly rapidly. We can drop [Dead Bolt](#) or [Fleeting Dusk](#), or even drop both to bring back [Anger of the Dead](#); if shadows are cheap, then we're happy to consume them freely again. Either way, after potentially one turn of setting up, we are well past the point where we're making one very powerful attack every single turn.

Perks

Perks

X: □□□
X: □□□
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X: □□□
X: □□□
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☐ Remove two (-1) cards
☐ Replace one (-2) card with one (+0) card
☐ ☐ ☐ Replace one (-1) card with one (+1) card
☐ ☐ ☐ Replace one (+0) card with one (+1)  card
☐ ☐ Add one (+2)  card
☐ ☐ Add one  and one  card
☐ ☐ Add two "1, 1 ally"  cards
☐ Ignore scenario effects
☐ Whenever you long rest, you may move one  up to three hexes
☐ Whenever you short rest, you may  to perform , ,  2 as if you were occupying a hex with a 
☐ While you are occupying a hex with a , all attacks targeting you gain disadvantage

1. The most important thing for us *by far* is consistency. We need to guarantee that we kill whenever we can, so we need to get rid of all of our negatives. The order isn't hugely significant, but I prefer to first remove my (-1)s, then replace the (-2), and then replace the remaining (-1)s.

2. Moving a shadow on long rest is a very large benefit for us, so we'll pick that one up next. It's very frequent that this saves a shadow from becoming completely worthless.

3. The curse and dark modifiers both do things that we like. Ideally we'll be getting kills, but we make enough little attacks that this isn't guaranteed, so the order of these two is up for personal preference. I prefer the dark modifiers first, but it's a very close call.

4. Everything from this point is much less important. If your party needs healing or is bad at dealing with poison/wound/etc, I would grab the heals next. If they lack CC, you can snag the disarm and muddle. If you find yourself short resting frequently, snag the short rest perk. If none of these apply, ignore scenario effects.

5. The disadvantage perk isn't *bad*, but the odds that we'll be taking a hit is very slim, so we take this one last.

Enhancements

The simplest choice here is [Call of Doom](#). Doubling the value of potentially seven attacks is *massive*, and makes this card worth using for its top action much earlier. It is an expensive enhancement, but it's enough better than the rest of our options that it's well worth saving for. After that, we simply have lots of single target attacks that we can enhance. I would typically recommend just going for a +1 in these cases. Poison isn't as exciting because we're typically hoping something dies before we're hitting it again. Wound looks good in theory, but there will be enough times that we just want to kill something and move the shadow immediately that it's just not worth the small chance that it lives long enough for wound to be two damage instead of one, especially given that wound is the more expensive damaging option. You could consider putting immobilize on one of your attacks if your party really lacks CC, and use that once a cycle on the hulking melee creature you know you won't bring down in one go, but for most parties it's just better for you to snag more kills and cycle more shadows.