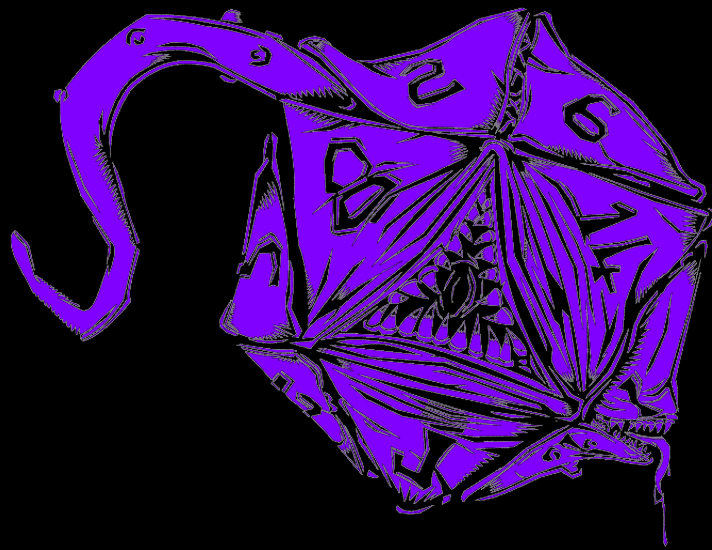


Gregorius21778:

A Gift from the Outer Dark



COMPATIBLE WITH
DS&DS

*A Character-Morphing Curse &
Halloween Horror Supplement*

Version 1.0;
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A Gift from the Outer Dark is one of my *Halloween Horrors*: a horror themed pay-what-you-want title that will become available at the start of October and is going to disappear from the virtual shelves again after All Hallows’ Eve. This one here will introduce a long-term curse into an ongoing game (or campaign) that will transform both the body and the very fate of a character, step by step. This is the third incarnation of this product. The first had been written for [Lamentations of the Flame Princess \(tm\)](#), this one was written to be compatible with **Dark Streets & Darker Secrets™**.

As it is common with old school RPG elements, the roll of the die dictates the turn the events take, but it all starts with a decision to scrutinize something that was Not Meant to be Screwed With.

Enjoy!

A Gift not Meant for Them



The beginning to all what follows is the find of a certain item by one of the PC. It may be found in the possession of a witch, cultist, weird scientist, madman or monster hunter. It may be uncovered in an old mansion, a museum, in a collection or in a pan shop. It may be found buried, hidden in a statue, sealed in a wall or washed ashore at a beach.

It is a gray metal disc, three inch thick and six inch in diameter. The metal is the color of lead, but it is neither as heavy nor as soft. The item will actually turn out to be a tin (a very solid one), but although one can see the line that indicates the end of the lid, it is impossible to remove it by hand (unless a character is in league with the *the Outer Dark* or an offspring of a race that worships them, see below). The metal proves to be harder than steel (or any other known metal) and resists any attempt to open it by force, or to destroy it. It will not crack, it will not shatter, it will not melt.

A character with a scientific concept could claim an advantage to find a solution, which -any- character could come up with as well by thinking about it scientifically and passing a **difficulty:3 Intellect test**: The lid might be held close by some kind of magnetism. Forcing electricity through it might mess up the polarity enough for the item to open up. Jury-rigging a device might require a **Money roll** (for the acquisition of parts and tools).

A Gifted character -may- be able to simply open it: those with an *Aberration*, *Alien* or *Daemon Heritage* may be among those meant to receive the gift. The final decision is up to the Referee.

A Power might be used to open up the lid. *Disrupt Power* will do so (as the force that holds it closed is akin to a power effect). Hitting it with a matching kind of *Energy Projectile* might work as well (Referee's call).

A character with a corruption may open up the lid as well (Luck roll).

A Smart character might uncover the link to a cult of the Abyss or the Outer Dark. A sincere cultist that has been initiated into "the higher mysteries" should be able to open the lid for them... if the PC find a one and make him or her do it for them.

The inside is lined with black satin and holds a small white gem with a purple hue. The precious stone has been cut into an almost round shape, its surface is made up of evenly shaped triangles. It gleams softly.

The exact shape of the gem is that of an icosahedron (a shape known to most roleplayers as that of the D20). It is enchanted and holds a gift for those who have in them the heritage of (or have pledged their souls to) an entity best described as *One of the Gods of the Outer Dark Beyond the Stars*.

Curiosity, Greed or Foolishness

As long as a character only inspects the gleaming gem briefly and then closes the lid again, nothing will happen. Both disc and glowing gem may be sold for a fine price to the right buyer.

If a character scrutinizes it more closely or lifts it from the satin (by *any* means), he or she will become hypnotized by the gem while the gleam brightens to clear purple light... and then dies down. The gleam of the gem is gone then, and the character has been bestowed with the gift it has contained.

A metamorphosis of both body and fate will set in. It already started the moment that the gleam left the gem. From now on, all results of a natural "19" test are now treated as a Critical Success. Furthermore, any Critical Success triggers a roll on the Metamorphosis chart (see next page). Results that change the die results are applied immediately, while all physical changes take a random amount of time till the metamorphosis is completed (roll a d6):

- 1: 2d6 hours
- 2-5: that many rounds
- 6: 1d6+2 turns.

While undergoing the transformation, the character is likely to suffer from additional difficulties to certain test, as the Referee sits fit.

Furthermore, each physical metamorphoses calls for a Willpower test to avoid Insanity. The victim needs to test against difficulty:4 and will otherwise lose 1d6+2 points. A witness must test against difficulty:2 and will otherwise lose 1d6 points of sanity.

For both victim and witness, the difficulty drops by 1 one each incident after the second.

Metamorphosis of Body and Fate



#01: Haunted by Success

Not only is the result of 19 treated as a Critical Success by the character, but now the 18 as well. If this Metamorphosis is rolled again, the 17 is treated this way, too. Then the 16. Then the 15, and so on....

#02: Five Fingers and the Right Hand

Roll a d6: On a result of 1-5 a finger swells, throbs and eventually bursts open to make way for a flexible, glistening purple tentacle that replaces the finger from now on.

1: Thumb 2: Index Finger 3: Middle Finger
4: Ring Finger 5: Baby Finger

The tentacle is one or two inch longer than the finger was, and is as flexible as one may expect. If a finger that has already been replaced comes up as a result again, the tentacle swells, throbs and then splits up in two. This way, the number of tentacles increases. It is up to the Referee at which point this may or may not interfere with the use of certain objects.

When a 6 comes up, all remaining natural fingers are morphed while the hand itself throbs and then dissolves. The finger tentacles now start directly at the wrist, and are accordingly longer. From this point on, no more finger tentacles may grow. The character may actually benefit from these *delicate tendrils*.

If this metamorphosis comes up again after the hand has been transformed, it is treated as **“Haunted by Success”**

#02: Five Fingers and the Left Hand

See above.

#03: The Right Arm is not Right

From shoulder to wrist, the skin of the limb starts to feel damp and turns sickly purple. The bones begin to ache and the joints feel hot. At the end it feels like hot wax would be poured under the skin, and the whole limb becomes flaccid. Bones and joints melt away while the arm itself elongates by several inches and form itself into a tentacle. The hand is not changed by this.

It will take the character two days to get used to the new limb, till then all tests that involve it suffer from

a (further) +2 difficulty, which is lowered to +1 after the first day. When the metamorphosis comes up again, the tentacle gains a foot in length and may be used as a whip in melee from then on (Medium Melee Weapon; counts as unarmed against armored targets.).

If the result comes up yet again, it is treated as **“Haunted by Success”**

#04: The Left Arm will not be Left

see entry #3

#05: The Right Leg Lost

From hip to toe the skin of the limb starts to itch, and then flakes away in large patches. What is revealed beneath is of a shocking purple color. Later, the bones and joints start to feel like jelly and the character will fall prone. Finally, a tingling sensation starts, but turns into the pain of a thousand hot needles. The flesh melts while leg and foot split up into two thick tentacles that are not strong enough to fully replace the limb the character now has lost.

The movement of the character is reduced by one step.

If this metamorphosis comes up again, one of the tentacles thickens and throbs before it splits into two tentacles, and thereby increases the total number by one. This mitigates the penalty mentioned above. If it happens an additional time (this leg or the other), the character may now even test Agility to still get an action in combat even when the chosen movement dictates otherwise.

After a total of five tentacles have been achieved (no matter which initial legs have been involved), #05 and #06 are treated as **“Haunted by Success”**

#06: The Left Leg Gives Way

see above

#07: The Right Eye

The area around the eye swells while the vision on its side becomes milky and fades to black. Eventually, the whole eye is pushed out from the inside and falls to the ground as 1d3+2 small, mucus-wet tentacles press forth from the socket. They move lazily, and on their own accord.

The character is now half-blind (+1 difficulty to melee attacks; +3 to ranged attacks) or completely blind if the other eye is missing as well. If there was no eye to

start with (due to a prior event in the character's life), the tentacles grow out of the empty socket.

If the same eye is rolled for again **or if both eyes were replaced and there is another roll on the Metamorphosis table(!)**, the eye-tentacles become pale and photosensitive. While bright, unobstructed daylight actually blinds the character now, other conditions allow the same sight as by torchlight (if any light is there) or candlelight (in darkness of any kind).

If this metamorphosis comes up yet again, it is treated as "**Haunted by Success**".

#08: The Left Eye

see #07

#09: Your Kind Shall Spread No More

It starts as a strange and unwholesome feeling in the loins, both hot and cold. The tissue seems to soften and lose firmness. Later, the genitalia start to feel damp and bereft of warmth, like a dead jellyfish. Then, the change happens. A male character will have both penis and scrotum rot away into viscous slime. Out of the open wound then grows a small cluster (1d6+2) of pale-purple tentacles that twitch at odd intervals. In the case of a female character, the labia will grow flaccid and turn into pale, hanging flaps of skin while the tentacle cluster grows right out of it, filling most of the cavity.

Sexual intercourse is no longer possible for the character, and the act itself gains a sickening quality to the PC, like wallowing in rancid fat.

If this metamorphosis comes up yet again, it is treated as "**In Failure, too**".

#10-11: Wet Behind the Ears

At first, it is a wet rash behind both ears, like an infection. What follows are headaches and a constant humming only the character perceives. In the end, the humming becomes a chorus as fine, worm-like tentacles spread out right behind both ears. They constantly wave, just as they would flow with a wind or current around them. The noise dies down then. The character will from now on be able to understand the spoken words of any being from **the Outer Dark** and **the Abyss** as well as those speaking a dialect of **the Elder Gods**.

When the result comes up a second time, the character will gain the ability to perceive every invisible presences in a Short Distance as a humming noise. The character will not be able to determine the exact location, only that something invisible is there.

When the result comes up a third time, the same is true for Weird Items, Magic Items and Artifacts. The humming of those are of a different quality, but the character will have to find out about the meaning by him- or herself.

If this metamorphosis comes up yet again, it is treated as "**In Failure, too**".

#15: Its Mouth

Every move of the lips causes an ache, then a sharp pain. Later, the lips and the skin around the mouth bulges and strains. It will finally rip as all of a sudden, dozens of fine, worm like tentacles burst forth. They will hang like a grotesque beard around the mouth and down the chin, unless the character speaks, eats, becomes agitated or aroused. Then, they start to writhe, roll, lift and wriggle.

When this metamorphosis comes up again, the voice of the character gains a sinister and unearthly quality. The words of the character will from now on be understood by any any being from **the Outer Dark** and **the Abyss** as well as those speaking a dialect of **the Elder Gods**

If this metamorphosis comes up yet again, it is treated as "**In Failure, too**".

#16: Entrails

It starts as a gripping in the guts, but turns to nausea as the innards seem to twist and turn inside of the body. This ebbs and flows. 1d6+2 rounds after eating, the character will feel sick and suffer a +1 difficulty to all actions for 1d4 turns. Still, the food stays in and is nourishing. But it is now impossible for the character to defecate. Instead, the PC will vomit a nasty mustard colored mucus that reeks like diarrhea. The character may from now on re-roll any failed Avoidance test against poisons. When the re-roll (!) is successful, the PC will immediately vomit the mustard colored mucus and will thereby be stunned for a round.

If this metamorphosis comes up yet again, it is treated as "**In Failure, too**".



#17: The Beast's Back

At first, the shoulders, upper back and the spine begin to ache and the muscles tighten. Later, it becomes impossible for the character to keep an upright posture as a hunchback begins to form and grows continuously. It enlarges and begins to take up more and more of the back till it reaches the tailbone and has the character look like a toad carrying its young on the back. The skin over this abnormal growth begins to stretch and balloon, to eventually burst with a !POP! while 1d3+1 fleshy purple tentacles, each the thickness and length of the character's arms, stretch out, only to sink down the back and sway lazily. After 1d6+2 days the character will have gained control over the limbs, but using them has the same penalty as a blind attack. They do provide the PC with a free unarmed melee attack against any opponent that attacks him or her from behind.

When the result comes up again, it is treated as "*In Failure, too*".

#18: You Cannot Keep Your Head

It starts as a headache. It grows into an unbearable migraine. In the end, everyone nearby can hear the skull crack under the skin before face and scalp peel away and open up like a flower in bloom. Everything inside the head rises on a cluster of tentacles that look like that of a deep sea anemone. The eyes sit on a tentacle each, the ears as well while the mouth sits on a particular thick and muscular tube that links it to what is left of the throat. The brain has been parted up (but is now twice its normal mass, as things are redundant now) and rests on different tentacle ends as well: each part looks strangely akin to a piece of broccoli, both in appearance and color. Any already existing metamorphoses remain unchanged. It is impossible for the PC to wear a helmet.

When the result comes up again, it is treated as "*In Failure, too*".

#19: Heart & Soul

A pain in the upper left part of the chest sets in while the heart beat slows. Later, it becomes erratic. All the character may do is to clutch the own chest in panic while beads of sweat form on the face. Then, the heart stops completely... but begins to pump again. Yet, it is a strange, alien feeling now. Not like the beating of a drum, but like the croaking of a toad. For a few days, the character believes to actually feel how the blood is pressed through the veins.

When this metamorphosis comes up again, roll a d6:

1-3: The character must roll a **Physique** test to avoid dying on the spot from a sudden heart failure as the rest of the body finally rejects the changed organ for good.

4: The expression and presence of the character gains an alien quality while new insights fill the mind. The PC may now *Claim an Advantage* on all Intellect rolls but the Referee may establish a Complication in every social interaction with all but long-standing acquaintances and close friends of the character.

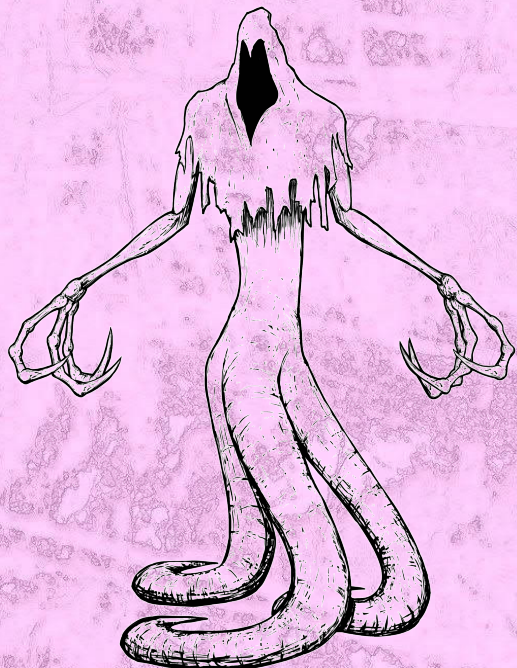
5: The intellect of the character becomes unfathomable while he or she gains a brooding and detached demeanor. The Intellect of the Character is increased by +3, but the PC will always count as surprised on the first round of combat.

6: Outsiders will not recognize it, but the character's mind became unfathomable, and the personality has an undefinable but undeniable eeriness. The PC may now *Claim Advantage* against all attempts to read, control or influence the mind.

When any result but "1-3" comes up again, the metamorphosis of heart and soul is complete. It, and all further upcoming results of this metamorphosis are treated a "*In Failure, too*".

#20: In Failure, too

From now on, not only a natural result of "20" triggers a roll on the Metamorphosis Table, but a natural "1" as well. If this Metamorphosis comes up again, the 2 triggers it, too. Then the 3. Then the 4, and so on....



The Conclusion of the Metamorphosis



When all results of the d20 have been either changed by *Haunted by Success* or *In Failure, too*, the metamorphosis is complete. The changes to the d20 results from *Haunted by Success* remain, but no further rolls on the Metamorphosis table are triggered.

From now on, every time the character gains a level, a **Willpower test** is necessary.

On a failure, the fate of the PC is sealed as at some point during the upcoming adventure (determined by the Referee) an utterly alien mind from *Beyond the Stars and the Outer Dark* will take over the body, and the character becomes an NPC from that moment on. The agenda, additional powers and weaknesses (if any) of this being is up to Referee, as well as its intellect. It could become a mystic quest giver, a dire enemy, a minor godling expecting worship or a powerful NPC that is simply going to part ways with the characters at some point during the adventure.

After three successful test the character has instead achieved a convergence while mostly remaining him- or herself, and remains a PC. How the rest of the world will treat this new inhabitant is a different matter.

But what if... ?

Perhaps the PC that got the gift WAS meant to have it. In that case, the Referee should take the player aside and hand him a copy of the rules regarding the metamorphosis. After the third manifestation, it is up to the player if the metamorphosis ends now or not. If they go on, the character may choose them to end after the 5th, 7th and 11th metamorphosis.

If the player decides to end the metamorphosis, the part of "The Conclusion" that deals with the chance of the PC becoming an NPC can be ignored, for the character automatically achieves a convergence instead.

The Tentacled Icosahedron (HD: 1)

The creature that bursts out of the corpse is a gleaming icosahedron, about a feet in diameter and rests on about a dozen tentacles on its lower side, each the size of the arm of an adult man. It attacks with whipping tentacles in combat but may instead used *Disrupt Power* at will. The loss of all hit points merely means that all its tentacles have been cut off. It may then be picked up and carried away, but will spontaneously regenerate all of its tentacles (and hit points) after 1d6+8 hours. If it is immersed in water, strange/cosmic energies or copious amounts of blood, it may do so immediately. Destroying the Icosahedron itself takes a character with Physique 12+ and a blunt medium weapon.

When it brings a character to zero hit points, its gleam will turn into a bright light that dies down the next round. The character now carries "the Gift". The creature itself is "dead" now and will not regenerate anymore. The body of the thing is not a gem, but a crystal, but still worth +2 cash points.

Print out the section below as a hand-out and tell the player to mark all changes from "**Haunted by Success**" with a 20 and those from "**In Failure, too**" with an X under the die. This will help the poor fool to keep track of which result now means what.



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