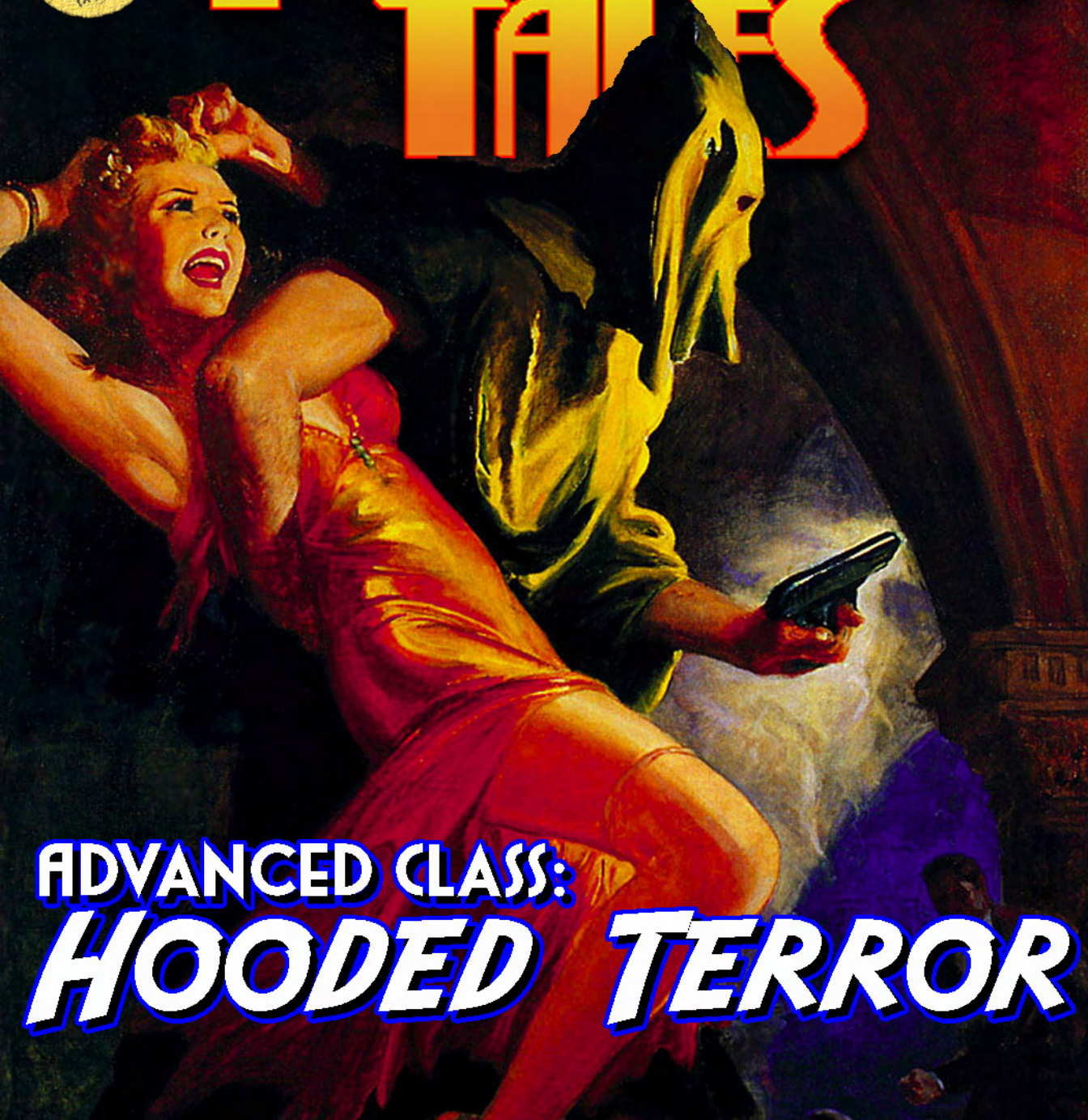




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THRILLING TALES



ADVANCED CLASS:

HOODED TERROR

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HOODED TERROR

BY C.L. WERNER

Lightning crashed against the black, overcast sky. Oliver Cartwright jumped as the thunderous roar rolled through the shadowy library, almost upsetting the high-backed upholstered chair set behind the massive oak desk. The lawyer smiled nervously, amused at his own agitation. He was forty-five years old and here he was cowering before the elements like a child. Cartwright closed the law book he had been perusing, setting it down on the desk. As he did so, his eyes fell upon the newspaper already resting there.



“Highgate Horror Strikes Again” the headline read in great bold letters. The smile on Cartwright’s face twisted into a grimace. That was what had him agitated, not the thunderstorm. The thought that the maniacal killer was still at large was enough to set any sane man on edge. Twelve persons, butchered in their own homes, hacked to ribbons with some sort of axe and

the police were no closer to catching the killer than they were after the first murder. They’d been chasing every possible lead, even going so far as to stage raids into Chinatown in the mistaken belief that the killings were the handiwork of a tong. Yet the murders continued unabated, the killer striking his victims with complete impunity.

Cartwright scowled, closing his fist around the newspaper. The police hadn’t listened to him, hadn’t believed him. They refused to accept the fantastic theory he had presented to them, the fantastic theory that, with each murder, Cartwright was more and more certain was the

truth. He stared at the crumpled newspaper. He’d been a fool to linger so long, he should have fled the country as soon as he was certain. Well, he certainly wasn’t going to wait any longer!

Cartwright hurled the newspaper from him and reached toward the telephone sitting on the corner of his desk. He’d leave straight away, maybe go to

Brazil or Europe until the police caught this madman. Cartwright hesitated after dialing the first number. He sighed and pressed down the receiver. He had to talk to Lieutenant Evers again, try one last time to make him believe. Once he did that, if the police still didn't believe him, he could flee the country with a clear conscience.

An icy chill clawed at the lawyer's flesh. Cartwright turned his head, trying to find the source of the draft. As he did so, his body froze, not from cold but from fear. The great glass double-doors that opened into the library were standing open, their heavy curtains billowing in the tempestuous wind. Cartwright could see rain blowing into the room, dampening the thick carpet. He could see other damp spots on the floor as well, the wet outline of footprints. His eyes followed them across the room, his heart thundering as loudly as the storm. He followed them across the dark expanse of the library, towards the deeper shadows at the far end of the room. His breath caught in his throat as he seemed to detect motion within the darkness. A moment later, he released the held breath in a gasp of fright when he distinctly heard the sharp click of the library door being locked.

Locked from the inside!

'Now we will not be disturbed.' The voice was like that of a rusty nail scraping across a coffin, speaking from the black shadows near the now locked doorway. Cartwright shuddered, struggling to hold the receiver in his hand.

'The police are on their way!' Cartwright shouted. The man in the shadows laughed, a sound that sent a fresh chill of terror racing up the lawyer's spine.

'No, they aren't,' the voice mocked. 'They aren't coming because you haven't called them yet. And because they don't believe you.'

Cartwright tried to compose himself, to control the fear threatening to consume him. Even now, a part of him rebelled, tried to tell him that his crazy theory was wrong. 'Resnick?'

Cartwright could hear the man moving within the

shadows, stalking through the shadows toward the lawyer. Cartwright frantically dialed for the operator. He started to speak, to demand to be connected to the police when a sudden crash of lightning lit up the darkened library. The lawyer screamed, the telephone dropping from suddenly nerveless fingers. In the flash of lightning he had seen his visitor, a twisted figure cloaked in black, a shapeless hat crushed down about its face.

That face! That horrible death's head with its grinning teeth and bulging, murderous eyes! It was not the face of a man, but the visage of an inhuman fiend! Yet in it Cartwright could still see the echoes of Walter Resnick, the once-brilliant chemist who had been discharged from the research plant after he had protested the company's control of the synthetic resin the chemist had developed in their labs. The police said Resnick was dead, that they had dredged his body from the river. Yet here he was, or at least what was left of him, standing in Cartwright's own home.

'Resnick! Listen to me! I was only doing my job!' Cartwright pleaded as the ghastly shape stalked toward him. 'No one was trying to cheat you!' The color drained from the lawyer's features as he saw the gleam of metal in the cloaked figure's hand. It was an axe! A small battle axe such as a mediaeval knight might wield in battle. Or such as the Highgate Horror might use in his crimes...

Cartwright backed away from the desk, retreating across the room. The Highgate Horror came closer, the axe glistening in its gloved hand. The murderer's chilling laughter echoed through the library.

'Go ahead and scream, Cartwright,' the Highgate Horror snarled. 'The others all did.'

The Hooded Terror is representative of the masked and often disfigured psychopathic maniacs who haunted the pulp era with a vengeance. No medium was free from their murderous hands, Hooded Terrors featured in films like 'Doctor X', 'The Cat and the Canary' 'One Frightened Night', 'Mystery in the Wax Museum' and 'The Bat', prowling the shadowy corridors of mammoth old mansions and plying their lethal trade with ghoulish gusto.

In the pages of the pulps, heroes like The Shadow and the Phantom Detective sometimes found their usual regime of mobsters and mad scientists interrupted by an even more maniacal breed of foe. On the radio, The Shadow was frequently pitted against Hooded Terror type fiends in dramas like 'The Nursery Rhyme Murders'. The Hooded Terror variety of outlandish villain was a direct inspiration for early comic book villains such as The Joker and would continue to influence horror films far beyond the pulp era in movies like 'House of Wax' and 'The Abominable Dr Phibes'.

The Hooded Terror is the embodiment of the fear and distrust of their audiences. They are the dark unknown that lurks just beyond the light, the inhuman fiend that might lurk deep inside any man. The methods and accoutrements of the Hooded Terror were both theatrical and ghastly, the better to horrify and frighten their audience.

In some ways, they were a safer sort of villain for audiences to relate to. Mobsters were only too real, the dangerous technology of the mad scientist all too possible. The Hooded Terror was a more fantastic menace, and in that sense they could be enjoyed without considering what warning proverb they might represent. These cloaked and masked killers offered a safe thrill for audiences that considered themselves too sophisticated for supernatural horrors like ghosts and vampires.

And yet, were they truly so innocent? Was the Moon Killer's cannibalistic full moon murders really so far removed from the real-life atrocities of Peter Kuerten, the infamous 'Dusseldorf Werewolf'? Was the Hooded Terror merely a more palatable allegory for a menace every bit as real as the mobster or the Communist spy? In some ways, the Hooded Terror was a popular stand-in for a phenomenon that wasn't unknown even in the 1930's when fiends such as the Torso Killer and Albert Fish, the Cannibal Killer, committed their revolting crimes. In the Hooded Terror, we find the pulp era stand-in for the modern serial killer, cloaked in the outlandish villainy only the pulps could deliver.

Adventures with a Hooded Terror should center upon mood and menace, dark places and darker deeds. Players might scramble to unlock the pattern to the Hooded Terror's crimes (there is always one, even if it only makes sense to the Hooded Terror himself) before the maniac kills again. They might find themselves desperately trying to prevent a beloved associate or even one of the player characters themselves from becoming the fiend's next victim. Perhaps they even have to rescue someone the Hooded Terror has abducted, driving right into the belly of the beast and confronting the Hooded Terror in his own Chamber of Horrors.

The Hooded Terror is designed to present a tough challenge, provided he is able to confront enemies on his own terms – within the close dark confines of an old abandoned mansion, in the black back allies of a big city ghetto, down the murky labyrinth of a sewer with its dripping narrow walls pressing in on every side. Used correctly, the Hooded Terror will present players with a tough, frightening foe.

REQUIREMENTS

To operate as a Hooded Terror, a character must fulfil the following criteria:

Base Attack Bonus: +3

Skills: Intimidate 6 ranks, Hide 6 ranks, Move Silently 6 ranks

CLASS INFORMATION

Hit Die: The Hooded Terror gains 1d10 hit points each level, plus his constitution modifier.

Action Points: A Hooded Terror gains a number of action points equal to 5 plus one-half his character level (rounded down) every time he reaches a new level.

Class Skills: The Hooded Terror's class skills are: Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Craft (chemical, visual art, writing) (Int), Disable Device (Int), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Hide (Dex), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (any) (Int), Listen

(Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Perform (Cha), Research (Int), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis)

Skill Points Each Level: 5 + Int modifier

CLASS FEATURES

Below are the class features peculiar to the Hooded Terror.

Scary: A Hooded Terror is a psychopathic maniac, his garb and mannerisms such that normal people find him unsettling even under the most innocuous circumstances. Under more sinister conditions, the Hooded Terror is positively frightening. At 1st level the Hooded Terror gains the Frightful Presence feat.

Signature Weapon: A Hooded Terror is a slave to his own insane compulsions. He will favour a particular method of attack time and again, obsessively using the same weapon to kill his victims. At 1st level, a Hooded Terror must decide what his signature weapon will be and choose the most appropriate feat to associate with it. The Hooded Terror gains one of

the following feats: Archaic Weapons Proficiency, Exotic Melee Weapon Proficiency, Combat Martial Arts. An axe-wielding Hooded Terror, for example, would choose Archaic Weapons for his signature weapon-associated feat, while a strangler (using unarmed strike as his signature-weapon) would choose Combat Martial Arts. A Hooded Terror may also choose poison or acid as his signature weapon. If he does this, he does not gain another feat, but will gain a +2 bonus to his Craft (chemical) skill.

Weapon Focus: The Hooded Terror becomes even more proficient with his signature weapon, gaining the bonus of the Weapon Focus feat with his chosen specialty attack form. At 2nd level, this bonus is +1 on all attack rolls made with the chosen weapon type. The Hooded Terror gains this feat again at 8th level, but must use it on his signature weapon again, increasing the bonus to +2. If the Hooded Terror specializes in acid or poison, he will gain a +1 bonus to his Craft (chemical) skill each time he gains the Weapon Focus feat.

| Class Level | Base Attack Bonus | Fort Save | Ref Save | Will Save | Special | Defense Bonus | Reputation Bonus |
|-------------|-------------------|-----------|----------|-----------|-------------------------------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1st | +0 | +0 | +1 | +1 | Scary, Signature Weapon | +1 | +1 |
| 2nd | +1 | +0 | +2 | +2 | Weapon Focus, Out of the Shadows | +1 | +1 |
| 3rd | +2 | +1 | +2 | +2 | Maniacal Killer, Bat-fall | +1 | +1 |
| 4th | +3 | +1 | +2 | +2 | Insane Courage, Henchman, | +2 | +2 |
| 5th | +3 | +1 | +3 | +3 | Hell's Own, Horrify | +2 | +2 |
| 6th | +4 | +2 | +3 | +3 | Chamber of Horrors, Bonus Feat | +3 | +2 |
| 7th | +5 | +2 | +4 | +4 | Minions | +3 | +3 |
| 8th | +6 | +2 | +4 | +4 | Weapon Focus, Wraith | +4 | +3 |
| 9th | +6 | +3 | +4 | +4 | Terrifying, Bonus Feat | +4 | +3 |
| 10th | +7 | +3 | +5 | +5 | Ripper | +5 | +4 |

Out of the Shadows: If the Hooded Terror can catch a victim by surprise, or from behind in such a manner that the victim does not get a Dexterity bonus to their defense, the killer is able to maximize the murderous attack and deals extra damage. This extra damage is 1d6 for each level the Hooded Terror has. The Hooded Terror must use his signature weapon when making this attack and must do lethal damage. The Hooded Terror's victim must be a living human being, and the murderer must be able to strike a vital spot – if he can only reach an arm or leg he cannot use this attack.

Maniacal Killer: By 3rd level, the Hooded Terror has become so unbalanced that whatever mundane concerns moved him to embark upon a life of crime and murder (greed, revenge, etc) have been forgotten. Now he is ruled by a diseased drive to kill and kill again. Each time the Hooded Terror kills a victim during an 'Out of the Shadows' attack with his signature weapon, he will gain an action point. This action point may be used freely at any time the Hooded Terror chooses. The Hooded Terror may only have one 'extra' action point at a time.

Bat-fall: The Hooded Terror gains the Tumble skill, if he does not already have it, but only for purposes of the 'Land Softly' ability. If the Hooded Terror already has the Tumble skill, he is able to safely drop even farther than normal – a successful check will treat the distance fallen as 20 feet shorter rather than 10 feet.

Insane Courage: A Hooded Terror gains a +4 morale bonus on all Will tests to resist fear effects and on level checks to oppose Intimidate checks.

Henchman: At 4th level, the Hooded Terror gains a devoted servant who slavishly aids and assists his master in his insane plans. This is treated the same as the Sidekick feat, except that the Hooded Terror can take his henchman at a lower level. The henchman is fanatically loyal to his master and gains a bonus of +4 to all Will saves made to resist Intimidation checks or any other Will-based contests that could result in him betraying the Hooded Terror. This +4 bonus does not apply to any other Will saves the henchman might be called upon to make, only those that could

be considered a threat to the Hooded Terror himself. For example, a henchman being interrogated about the real identity of the Hooded Terror would gain the +4 bonus, but the same henchman being intimidated into revealing his own complicity in the Hooded Terror's crimes would not.

Hell's Own: A Hooded Terror is notoriously difficult to kill. Even after receiving punishment that should kill any normal man, these maniacs rise again in a final depraved attempt to steal one last life on their way to the grave. At 5th level, a Hooded Terror gains the ability to 'cheat death', at least in the short term. After being reduced below 0 hit points, the Hooded Terror will 'die' as any normal character.

However, the Hooded Terror's murderous will is stronger even than the pull of death. Every round after dying, the Hooded Terror may make a Will check with a DC of 25. He may make one such check at the end of every round following his death for a number of rounds equal to his level. Upon succeeding the check, the Hooded Terror hideously springs back to life, mortal wounds weeping blood and gore, furiously trying to kill everyone around him.

The restored Hooded Terror has a number of hit points equal to his level and gains a +1 bonus to all combat rolls while in his 'restored' state. This terrible extension of life does not last long, however. The infernal vitality motivating the Hooded Terror will quickly ebb, causing him to lose 1 hit point at the end of each round after he is 'restored' in addition to any new injuries incurred during combat. Once reduced below 0 hit points a second time, the Hooded Terror is well and truly dead.

Horrihy: The Hooded Terror may try to extract information from an immobilized victim by employing his signature weapon in a sadistic display. The Hooded Terror gains a +4 circumstance bonus to his Intimidation check when interrogating a victim in this way. Hardly one to show restraint, the Hooded Terror must use lethal force when Horrifying a victim.

In order to Horrify a victim, the unfortunate must be immobilized (tied in a chair, shackled to a wall,

paralyzed by poison or simply held by the Hooded Terror's accomplices). The Hooded Terror then attacks his victim, automatically hitting, dealing normal damage.

Once damage has been calculated, the Hooded Terror may apply the Horrify bonus to his Intimidation check. If the attempt to horrify his victim fails, the Hooded Terror may keep trying until the victim either relents, becomes unconscious or dies. Once a Hooded Terror has set out to horrify a victim, he may not revert to a normal Intimidation roll. The Horrify bonus is not cumulative, the circumstance bonus will always be +4, it does not stack.

Chamber of Horrors: At 6th level, the Hooded Terror has established his own secret sanctuary, a hidden stronghold which mirrors the maniac's own twisted madness. This hideout is often established in some morbid setting. Wax museums, mortuaries and catacombs are just a few examples of places a Hooded Terror is likely to set up shop.

The location of the Hooded Terror's hideout will cover 1,000 square feet per level the Hooded Terror has (so a 6th level Hooded Terror will have a 6,000 square foot Chamber of Horrors), arranged according to the madman's insane whims. The Chamber of Horrors features a number of secret doors and hidden passages equal to the Hooded Terror's level. The DC to find these hidden fixtures is 25. The lair is also likely to contain such pleasant amenities as torture devices and death traps, providing the GM approves.

A Hooded Terror fills his Chamber of Horrors with ghastly trophies, gruesome displays of his hideous



crimes. Wax-covered corpses, decapitated heads, mummified bodies, these are just a few of the morbid prizes a Hooded Terror might adorn his lair with.

The presence of these hideous trophies is enough to unnerve even the most stalwart heart. Characters inside a Chamber of Horrors must make a Concentration check every time they try to use a skill, reflecting the distracting, unnerving presence of the Hooded Terror's trophies. The Hooded Terror himself, his henchman and his minions are used to the horrible trophies and do not need to make Concentration rolls while in the Chamber of Horrors.

Bonus Feat: At 6th and again at 9th level, the Hooded Terror gains a bonus feat, which must be taken from the following list.

Alertness, Blind-Fight, Builder, Combat Reflexes, Confident, Creative, Elusive Target, Focused, Great Fortitude, Heroic Surge, Improved Damage Threshold, Improved Critical, Infamy, Stealthy, Toughness, Whirlwind Attack

Minions: At 7th level, the Hooded Terror gains a small number of minions. These are men who have

fallen under the Hooded Terror's terrible power, serving him fanatically out of fear rather than loyalty. They know only too well what the price for failure or betrayal of their master is. These minions can be anything from petty criminals who learn too late the insanity of their new gang boss to seemingly upstanding professional citizens who are forced to serve the Hooded Terror because of threats or blackmail.

Never numerous, the number of minions a Hooded Terror has access to will be $1d6 +$ the Hooded Terror's Charisma bonus. The Hooded Terror gains 1 additional minion for every level he has above the 7th level, so a 9th level Hooded Terror would gain 2 extra minions. A Hooded Terror's minions are always 1st level, but may come from an assortment of classes and backgrounds.

All minions of a Hooded Terror live in mortal fear of their master. The Hooded Terror's minions gain the Iron Will feat, but only in situations where they are being asked to betray the Hooded Terror. An example would be a Hooded Terror's minion being given 'the third degree' to reveal the location of his master's hideout. In all other situations, the minion does not gain the +2 bonus to Will saves unless he or she otherwise has the Iron Will feat.

Wraith: At 8th level, a Hooded Terror is able to move ghost-like to and from the scenes of his crimes. He leaves almost no evidence for pursuers to follow. Characters trying to find the Hooded Terror with Investigate, Listen, Search or Spot suffer a -4 penalty.

Terrifying: At 9th level, the Hooded Terror's gruesome reputation has grown to such levels that opponents making a Will save against his Frightful Presence suffer an additional +5 to the DC.



Ripper: A Hooded Terror is skilled at rendering his enemies incapable of further resistance. When making an 'Out of the Shadows' attack, the Hooded Terror may slash and tear at his victim in such a way that they suffer 2 points of Strength damage. The points lost to the mutilating injuries will heal at a rate of 1 point per day unless medical attention is given that will speed the process.