

FALL 2012

ELDER TUNNELS

HALLOWEEN SPECIAL



INSIDE:

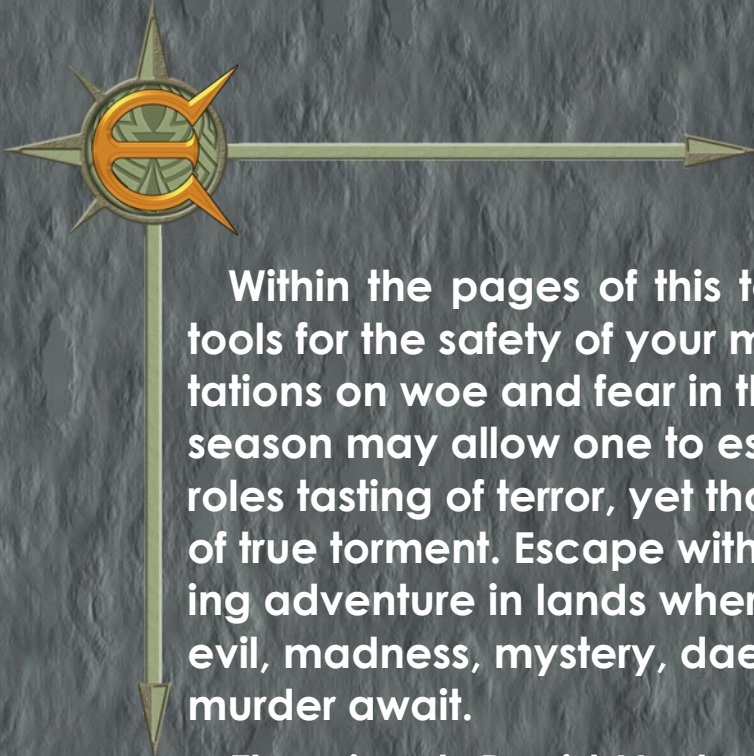
CREATURE FEATURES

SOLO BY DAVID CROWELL

GM ADVENTURE BY DAVID MOSKOWITZ

INTRODUCTION BY ANDRE KRUPPA





Within the pages of this tome are tools for the safety of your mind. Meditations on woe and fear in this dreadful season may allow one to escape into roles tasting of terror, yet thankfully free of true torment. Escape with skin-crawling adventure in lands where darkest evil, madness, mystery, daemonry, and murder await.

The wizards David Moskowitz, David Crowell, Tom Loney, and Jerry Teleha wrought these Halloween magicks. Talismanic artists KO Okami, Katje Romanov, Chris Rowan, and Mike Hartlieb created sigils and ikons to aid the enchantments that keep the maddening terrors at bay. These few stand between you and true darkness!



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ELDER TUNNELS

Hallowe'en 2012

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INTRODUCTION

Quickly! Quickly now! Let me draw you within where we can't be seen. Quiet! We must whisper! Please, help me with this door. Gently, quietly slide the bolt home. We should be safe for a while now.

Soon, the time when the veil between the living and dead is most thin will be upon us. Samhain, All Hallows' Eve, and Hallowe'en: all names for this most fateful of days. The Other Side is close now! Vengeful souls, wraiths of hate and malice, tenebrous shades of melancholy, and a host of shackled spirits shall soon be among us! It is whispered by erudite scholars of wizardry and dark lore that things beyond ken may reach through the veil with ease when season and stars are right. Some say this coming Hallowe'en is such. Have you heard that the stars may be right – horrifically right?

We must be as mice in the wall, leaves on the ground, a blade of grass in the lawn. For if *they* come and see us, we will be easy prey. It is said many spirits see poorly betwixt worlds, and so safe. A simple costume terrifying thought. Imagination through the guise, what horror would be sure to

The costume is near-safe. They told you that,

Once you have demystified your mind, the hours from the fall night. In these hours it is such as you, sensitive to

to disguise the psyche. To be safe from the spirits, be another for the night, playing a role other than your own! Potent beings may not sense the waft of your true essence and come to inflict unimaginable terror. Especially when the occasion is embraced!

Within the pages of this tome are tools for the safety of your mind. Meditations on woe and fear in this dreadful season may allow one to escape into roles tasting of terror, yet thankfully free of true torment. Escape with skin-crawling adventure in lands where darkest evil, madness, mystery, daemonry, and murder await. The wizards David Moskowitz, David Crowell, Tom Loney, and Jerry Teleha wrought these Halloween magicks. Talismanic artists KO Okami, Katje Romanov, Chris Rowan, and Mike Hartlieb created sigils and ikons to aid the enchantments that keep the maddening terrors at bay. These few stand between you and true darkness!

I thought I felt a chill. Did you feel that?

Please hand me my mask.

MY NAME IS ANDRE BRUPPA. MAY I ASK YOURS?



the guising keeps us warding evil is such a gine, if one of them saw gruesome, agonizing horror?

ly all that keeps you didn't they?

fended your body, you most especially during of darkness until mid-best for those among us, the strange and weird,

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Junior's Return

by David Moskowitz

A GM adventure for three to five
characters of levels three through six

I. INTRODUCTION

The Backstory

Secluded on the forested side of Mount Byscch, the village of Merysville produces dried meats of legendary quality and leather goods of a strength not normally possible without magical construction (armor made from this leather offers triple the usual protection for five times the cost). How? Via the concoctions of alchemists Victor and Elizabeth Vollenhurst, who live three miles down the hill.

Raised hidden from the world, Junior, the Vollenhursts' monstrously strong second-born son, became envious of the happy pairs around him: his parents and his half-witted elder twin siblings, who had been born conjoined at the head but were later separated. One year ago, Junior demanded a playmate. Told no, he lashed out, resulting in the twins' maiming, and then ran off. Fearing how Elizabeth's reaction might further disrupt their lives, Victor drugged his wife and buried her beneath the living room floor, telling villagers she had left him for a young tradesman.

Living in the woods and continuing to grow at an accelerated rate, Junior has periodically snuck into town to abduct a child, none of whom have survived his roughhousing. What began as innocent play has turned into serial murder, with Junior keeping the bodies. He has recently appeared at his father's window with an ultimatum: "Change your mind; provide a suitable playmate, or I will let the villagers know who is to blame."

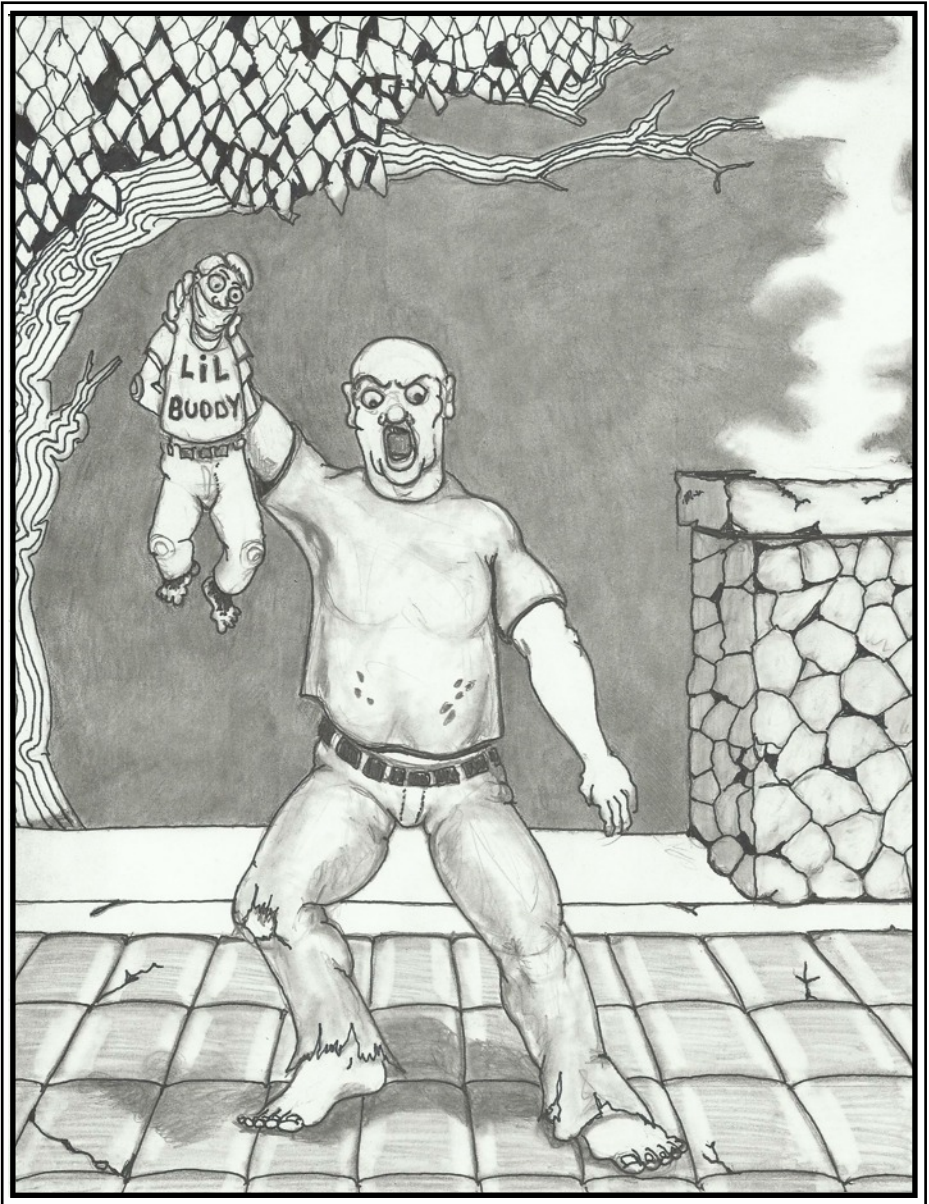
While players can reach any number of endgames (mostly depending on who attacks whom and when), you, the GM, are responsible for the tone of the adventure. In your dialogue and descriptions, you can run Junior's Return as anything from a mix of *Young Frankenstein* and *Metalocalypse* to *Rosemary's Baby* blended with Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* and chased down with a thalidomide cocktail. The middle ground is the inspiration, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

II. HERE TO THERE

Where the Players Start, Where They Need to Be

At the base of Mount Byscch is a small but busy trading post and inn. A newly posted flyer reads: "Alchemist seeks temporary, immediate protection from former Wizard partner. 500 gp per person, per day, half paid in advance. Interested parties are to bring this note with them." Directions to Vollenhurst's house, half a day's travel away, follow.





Christopher Lee Rowan

If players inquire as to why nobody's taken up the challenge—especially those in Merysville—they will hear 2d3 of the following rumors.

Rumors

- 1 Mages avoid Merysville because their magic quickly drains away (which means that if Vollenhurst still needs protection, the Wizard must be especially tough). *[Note: If the game needs balancing in favor of the enemies, GMs should automatically feed players this rule and then raise the SR level of all spells.]* There is some validity to this rumor, as evidenced in the low Wiz scores of the main cast. If the delvers think to ask a Vollenhurst family member at the end of the scenario, she or he may (or may not) tell them that something about the mountain itself dampens the wizardly powers of those who have lived in the area for long.
- 2 Vollenhurst's workers are his own children, who are chemically enslaved.
- 3 Vollenhurst's workers are zombies—and among them is his late wife.
- 4 Alchemical leather-curing? It's a lie: the animals are bred in captivity and subject to magical and physical torture from birth.
- 5 The alchemist's wife vanished years ago, and soon after so did the local children.
- 6 Vollenhurst's secrets are worth up to 50,000 gp to the right source.
- 7 Imbibing the same potions used to cure the skins has driven Vollenhurst mad.
- 8 The local forest is a tinderbox.
- 9 The curing process drives the villagers insane. They pay great money to little folk if they agree to roam about pretending to be children.

III. THE SETTING

The Mountain Environs

The mountain forest is a thriving ecosystem, filled with acorn-bearing trees to feed the deer, who in turn feed the predators. The growth is so dense that those who aren't of woodland races or rangers must:

1. Add one level to any Dx saving roll in missile combat
2. Make a 1st lvl SR Dx every combat round to avoid having St-based Adds cut in half
3. Halve their Sp when running.



On the journey from the post to Vollenhurst's, nothing will attack the players, but the GM should hint at the difficulty of fighting in the woods and provide plenty of "random encounter" die rolls (and act disappointed) to keep the players on edge.

The Home and Surroundings (see map)

The River

A good six feet deep and 30 feet across, the river is more than a mountain stream but is less than safely navigable by any ship more than 20 feet in length. Immediately downstream from the Vollenhurst house, the water has a distinctly foul taste and smell, but it is otherwise harmless (at least in adventure-length doses). Vollenhurst built a small aqueduct leading into the house for the kitchen, lab, and privy (WC).

Downstairs

The ground floor is plain but comfortable. The windows (W) are large enough for someone to crawl through, and the doors are heavy but unlocked. (If players look, they'll see signs of repair on the frames where bars and locks may once have been, but, if so, they have since been torn out.) The furnishings are comfortable but not extravagant. In Vollenhurst's master bedroom is a chest (X) that contains enough gold to pay the delvers, plus an additional 2d6 x 1,000 gp. The lock can be picked or smashed with a 1st lvl SR Dx or St, respectively, but the lid is trapped to release a cloud of toxic smoke. The smoke will kill any within a five-foot radius who fail a 4th lvl SR Con and will turn any exposed skin permanently blue (no SR). The safe way to open the chest is to turn it upside down; there is a trap door in the bottom.

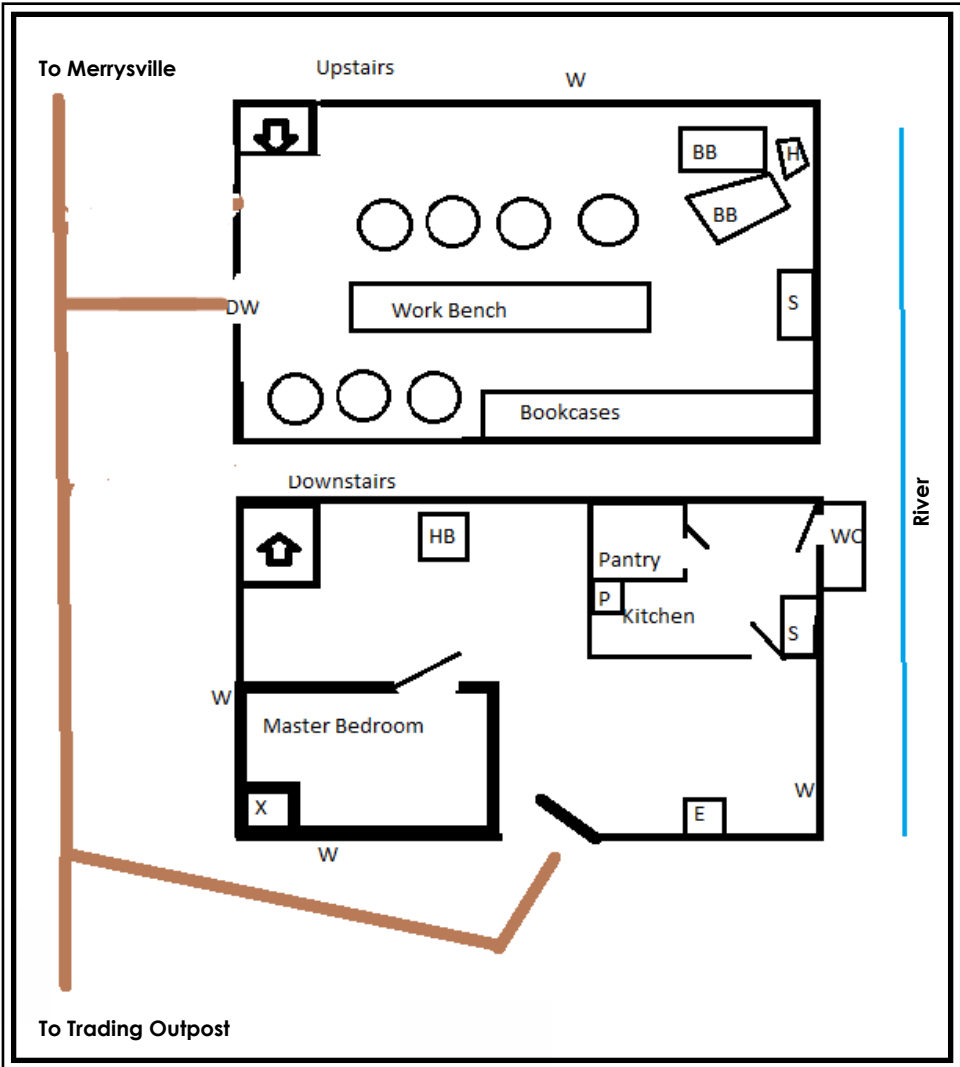
The Kitchen

All of the kitchen equipment is rust-free, non-stick, and of high quality (it is worth up to 1,500 gp). However, unless the delvers know to look for things like that *in character*, they won't notice unless they cook on it. The pantry door, which is easily opened, has airtight seals. Inside, there is a brick of preservistol (see appendix) and an assortment of fresh meat and vegetables safely stored at room temperature. A storage container (P) with 10 bricks of preservistol is in a metal bin just outside the pantry. The stove (S) is quite advanced, providing heat for the kitchen as well as the second story lab. It is the *only* source of fire in the house.

The first-floor ceiling and the floor of the level above it are covered with tiles, but, unknown to Victor, Elizabeth filled the space between with explosives designed to incinerate the house upon exposure to



even a tiny spark, carefully focusing the blast to minimize damage to its surroundings. She had hoped to save the area from the depredations of her husband and children by catching them in a blast. However, Victor tends to be very careful with fire, due to the many flammable alchemical materials on the second floor and the very dry air of the season; no spark has yet ignited the explosives. (HB) is not a ceiling tile, but cloth painted to look like one. Once the ceiling catches fire, everyone has 30 seconds to get out. All those caught inside take 20d6+50 hits damage. The alchemical powders stored on the second floor will produce a noxious smoke if ignited (3rd lvl SR Con every turn or lose 1/2 Combat Adds). Those inside, or outside but within 20 yards of the house, must make two 2nd lvl SRs Lk, the first to avoid being blinded and the second, deafened, for 1d6 hours.



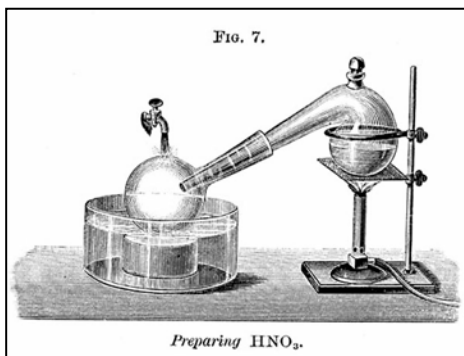
Elizabeth's Resting-place (E)

Elizabeth's body rests in a coffin buried beneath the living room. Its top is flush with the floor, and it blends in with the woodwork as if it were a trap door. The coffin has a handle on hinges, which keep the handle flush as well. If players look up, they will see that one of the ceiling beams has a hole in it, through which a rope could be run to help provide the leverage needed to raise the coffin. With the pulley, it takes a 3rd lvl SR St to lift the coffin out. Grabbing just the handle, it takes a 6th lvl SR St. In either case, failure requires a 2nd lvl SR Lk to avoid a bad strain or injury, which would result in a deduction from St of the amount by which the roll was missed.

The coffin is sealed, but only with wax. If it is opened, Elizabeth will awaken immediately.

Upstairs

This is where the twins sleep and prepare the alchemical solutions. The alchemical powders are in unmarked barrels. (S) is the location of the cauldron (heated from below) and a water pump. Virtually everything on the second floor is flammable, and the powders here will produce a noxious smoke if ignited (3rd lvl SR Con every turn or lose 1/2 Combat Adds).



Two beds (BB) are positioned at an angle, so that the twins sleep as if still conjoined. On a night table (H) between the beds is a glass jar that contains the wedge of skull and brain removed from the twins during their separation. As they were 15 weeks old when the surgery occurred, the size may throw players off (though, as they still have fine blonde hair, the players may notice the connection). An external dumbwaiter (DW) allows the twins to deliver goods and take payment without exposing themselves; the villagers would not take kindly to their unusual looks, and Victor does not allow them to leave the house.

Bookcases

In the bookcases are Vollenhurst's bookkeeping (readable) and Elizabeth's alchemical notes (coded). Nothing short of torturing Vollenhurst or a 9kW computer will decipher the alchemical notes (in which case, they're worth 50,000 gp). As an un-decoded novelty, they're worth 5 sp. The townsfolk, expecting they can't be deciphered, will let

the players take them if there have been no civilian fatalities. Alchemists will pay up to 500 gp in the hopes of deciphering them.

IV. ACTION!

Earlier on the day of the delvers' arrival, Junior, making good on his threat to his father for not providing a "suitable playmate," traveled from a point just downhill of Merysville to Vollenhurst's home, leaving a trail that began with the clothes of the townfolks' dead children and then switched to their bones (but no skulls) as he approached his destination. His goal? Working the peasants up into a violent mob by the time they reach Vollenhurst.

He then climbed on Vollenhurst's roof, waiting for visitors. When Vollenhurst opens the door to greet the delvers, Junior throws a corpse at their feet and ducks out of sight. Close examination reveals the body is that of an adult hobb, but one dressed as a child (see rumor #9 above).

"Now you understand," Vollenhurst will tell the delvers, ushering them inside, "why I need protection. My former colleague has been killing children and is framing me for their murders." He also uses the dead hobb and children to explain why he'd rather not hire villagers, even assuming any were up to the task: some villagers have questionable enough morals to send innocent hobbs unknowingly to their deaths, while most others would likely be tricked into believing that Vollenhurst, rather than his colleague, murdered them. The threat, he explains, comes from a former colleague who specialized in astral magics, and tonight the threat will be at its worst.

If players ask what is so special about tonight, he'll ask them if they've looked at the stars and, if need be, begin a long lecture about the stars' connection to his foe's power. A 5th lvl SR In will leave a player no doubt it's all lies.

If asked about a wife, Vollenhurst will say he's never been married: "Who'd want to live here?...But a woman's touch would have probably made training the twins easier. They were "products" of my previous associate—he caused them to be born conjoined—and my having liberated them from that condition is a major source of his anger."

Vollenhurst will give players a brief tour and have the twins make up to 3,000 gp worth of potions—but nothing flammable—to aid them. Additionally, if players act worthy of his trust (don't nose around too much or ask for more money than the amount listed in his posting), he will give them 1d6 flasks of *fleshfire* (see appendix).

During this time, he will stay close to players and do mostly what they advise if it's clearly in the interest of his survival. He will actively discourage any preparations that involve fire due to the volatile nature of some of the chemicals in the home, but if players want to bar the doors and windows, even if it means damaging the home, he's agreeable.

Junior remains on the roof. If a single player decides to search there and goes up, Junior will attack. Upon killing the player, or if he faces multiple players, he will jump off the roof into the forest and run off, returning behind a mob of villagers.

If the players stay but do not discover Junior on the roof, they should have about six hours to prepare. Vollenhurst should tell them he expects his former colleague to arrive at that point, due to astral configurations that would be advantageous to the Wizard. Of course, the delvers may also guess that a mob of enraged villagers might be on its way.

If instead the delvers decide to head into the village—against Vollenhurst's wishes, as he wants them to remain nearby to protect him—they encounter 25 armed peasants following the trail to Vollenhurst's home. If the delvers attack the peasants, Junior will come out of the woods several yards away and begin hurling skulls at the delvers (3d+10 Adds—total—if Junior makes his SR on Dx), luring them all to Vollenhurst's, where he will head back to the roof. After all, what good is bloodshed if it's not on his father's doorstep?

When the villagers arrive at Vollenhurst's door, Junior will announce his presence on the roof as soon as conversation among Vollenhurst, the villagers, and the players threatens to cool down. He will start talking about the dozen children he's killed, each description more graphic than the previous. He will intersperse his comments with questions regarding Elizabeth's whereabouts... *Action!*

V. CHARACTERS

Note: All characters are Citizen types, regardless of attributes

Victor Vollenhurst

Victor Vollenhurst likes to think of himself as a natural philosopher because he's more a natural opportunist than a good alchemist. Consumption of his own concoctions since Elizabeth's "departure" has



resulted in inflated attributes and the coloring of someone with a tanning-booth addiction. His skin, though smooth, is as tough as cured leather.

In	16	St	22
Lk	13	Con	16
Chr	17	Dx	20
Wiz	6	Sp	28

Leathery Hide: 4 hits taken

Weapon: Victor has no combat training but is competent with a whip he developed to discipline the twins and Junior. It is a 3d+4 weapon, chemically treated to do non-fatal damage (see appendix). Spite Damage occurs on a roll of 1, 2, or 3 and not only comes off of Con but reduces his opponent's Adds 25% per point of damage for the next round.

Behavior: Whatever self-preservation demands—this includes blaming his “late” wife for everything or sacrificing the twins, the delvers, or anyone else.

Junior

Junior is no shambling, mindless flesh golem. Rather, he is the third Vollenhurst child, and was such a sick infant that Elizabeth, unable to treat him through her own skill, consented to her husband's unorthodox experimental treatments. He is seven feet tall and has an adult brain, but is only 11 years old—something that shows in his face, which is a paler orange hue than his father's but is striated with stretch marks from accelerated growth.

He is agile and smart, and, though he is not trained with weapons, he has plenty of combat experience from fighting the local fauna, which provide his clothing and food.

In	16	St	65
Lk	18	Con	95
Chr	17	Dx	30
Wiz	13	Sp	25

Hits taken: 15

Behavior: Junior will protect his father from physical damage at all costs—he wants the old man to see the suffering he's caused. If, however, Junior is hit with *fleshfire*, he will dive straight for his father, and hold him, igniting Vollenhurst as well. Junior will hold on until one or the other is dead; if that's Vollenhurst, Junior will attempt to dive in the river and swim away.

Special attacks: Junior will try to grab what he (that is, the GM) perceives as the biggest threat or closest combatant (50/50 chance). To do this, Junior must make a Dx saving roll at the target's level. Once he has seized someone:

1. If surrounded by enemies or inside with space to move, Junior will use his captive as a weapon, swinging his victim about to keep foes at bay. Doing this is treated as non-fatal combat, with an added half of the St damage he inflicts on others affecting his "weapon," but as Con.
2. If inside and at close quarters, Junior will attempt to strangle his captive. This works as normal combat, but the victim has his or her St cut in half every round, and damage is applied to both Con and St.
3. If outside and not immediately surrounded by enemies, Junior will hurl the victim away. If the victim weighs less than 2,000 w.u., Junior will hurl him or her upward, underhand. What goes up...hits ground for 10d6 damage. (A successful 2nd lvl SR Lk will halve the damage, for hitting trees that break the fall.) Otherwise, Junior will hurl the delver or townspeople into the nearest tree for 7d6 damage. (A successful 2nd lvl SR Sp halves the damage, as the delver is quick enough to brace him- or herself.)

Trent and Trini

Trent and Trini are the Vollenhursts' firstborn children: Siamese twins of different sexes who were joined at the head, making a V-shape, at birth. Rather than split the common mass, Vollenhurst removed it. The twins are obedient. They are especially sensitive to light and loud noises but have no sense of smell, taste, or touch. On the side where each head is pared down, each is also missing an arm. Junior had inadvertently plucked Trent's out of its socket. Trini, unable to cope with such a difference, grabbed an axe and chopped her own arm off.

Trent and Trini each have the following stats:

In	6	St	30
Lk	4	Con	16
Ch	4	Dx	4 (25 in combat)
Wiz	5	Sp	4 (15 when working in the lab)

Behavior: The twins have negligible will, and will do whatever their father says, including covering themselves with *fleshfire*. Seeing Elizabeth will send them into a catatonic state.

Special (only) attack: Only on command, Trent and Trini will attempt to jump on a target from either side and, with unexpected dexterity, position their legs and arms to try to open up the attacker like a lobster. The rules for securing and damaging the attacker are identical to those for Junior's strangulation attack.

Elizabeth Vollenhurst

Victor's wife is smarter than him (most of the developments are hers, though for business reasons she let Victor take the credit) and has no idea how strong she's become due to soaking in preservistol.

In	30	St	50
Lk	12	Con	15
Ch	17	Dx	28
Wiz	6	Sp	28

Hits taken: 15

Behavior: As Elizabeth has a strong sense of personal responsibility, her goal is to trigger the Hellbomb Burst mechanism in the floor (with a loud hint: "I'm putting an end to this madness!"). Where will she get the fire? From seizing a peasant's torch? From the kitchen? From the delvers? She is so focused on her goal that she will not attempt to save the twins prior to setting a fire. She is not, however, suicidal, and will attempt to get out before the place goes up in flames.

When or if Elizabeth is released from her coffin:

- * If Junior and Vollenhurst are both alive, and if fighting has not begun or there's a pause (for instance, if a villager attacks her "so she can't breed no more monsters," and, to everyone's shocked surprise, she crushes him with the superhuman strength gained from the preservistol), she will begin interrogating the adventurers, as they are both outsiders and clearly agents of Vollenhurst. "This is a family matter," she will say, insisting that they leave.

At this point, Vollenhurst will offer to double their money if the adventurers stay and protect him from Elizabeth and the villagers, while she will sic Junior (who will obey because it will upset his father) on them if they don't leave.

- * If Junior is dead (or downstream), Vollenhurst will to engage the delvers as described above. (Vollenhurst will go as far as attempting to kill Elizabeth in order to protect the house.)

- * If Junior and Vollenhurst are both dead, Elizabeth will attempt to torch the house, and the remaining villagers will try to stop her—with lethal force if need be. If the delvers aid her against the villagers, she will ensure they all leave together safely and then will reward them with the safely opened money box rescued from the ashes.

Villagers

The villagers are Citizens: St 9, Dx 9, Con 9 individuals without proper combat training. They do 1d+3 damage in combat whether they are armed with axes, hammers, or pitchforks. Torches do 1d damage, but with Spite on a 1 or a 2. Villagers do wear specially treated leather clothing, which takes 3 hits.

Behavior: An absence of any reason for suspicion—until now—and Vollenhurst's role as the linchpin of Merysville's economy make them short-tempered but initially willing to listen to him and the delvers when they reach his house. In combat, once two thirds of their numbers are out of action, they will flee.

VI. ENDGAME/RESOLUTION

- * The fighting—no matter who the combatants are—will continue until Junior is dead (1,500 AP) or far downstream (500 AP).
- * For every surviving peasant, 100 AP.
- * The house survives: 200 AP if Elizabeth is not awakened, 500 AP if she is.
- * Getting the full story: Up to 2,000 AP.

VII. APPENDIX: SPECIAL ITEMS AND NON-FATAL COMBAT

Preservistol

One brick placed in an airtight environment up to 125 cubic feet in volume will stop all decay (including aging and fermentation). The brick breaks down at a rate of 5% per month. For every month (minimum one) an item is thus preserved, it will last an additional three months in pristine condition away from the preservistol. Each brick should fetch up to 1,200 gp, but only from someone with that kind of money to spend on food. (Think royalty. Tavern owners will pay 250 gp, tops. Ordinary rich folk? 100 gp.)



Fleshfire

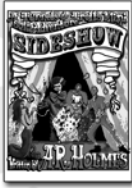
Think of napalm: it sticks to flesh, which chemically reacts to it, behaving as though on fire but without burning. Fleshfire victims take five points of damage directly off Con each combat turn, and their Adds are halved. Nothing less than submersion in cold water (e.g., the river) will put out the fire, and even then the player must remain submerged for three turns before it washes away. One dose sells for 800 gp.

Non-fatal Combat

(I may want to hurt you, but my lawyer/conscience says I shouldn't injure you)

Villagers are, for the most part, innocent civilians. Thus, depending on the nature of the game, players may want this option as they oppose them. Characters who make a saving roll at the opponent's level +1 (consider civilians to be of level zero) on the prime attribute of player's choice will do damage to St rather than Con until St goes to zero or below. Once the target's St hits zero, he or she will be unconscious and out of action for a full day.





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CREATURE FEATURE



The Bone Lords

by Tom Loney

THE BONE LORDS are beings of loathsome, evil vileness so despicable that the softness that was their living flesh has been discarded ages past. Many started out as dabbling necromancers in their “youthful days,” gaining the fullness of their power through decades of diabolical ritual and essence-stealing magick. The death of a Bone Lord’s physical body is seen as not much else beside leaving adolescence.

The exact process by which these evil magi make themselves into walking skeletons is unknown. Some say there is a special spell requiring scores of kettles’ worth of innocent blood. Others say that would-be Bone Lords must have themselves bitten by zombies to start the process. Many believe that both of these are components of an even larger ritual. It is not an easy process, but to the necromancer of this ilk, it’s worth it.

Characteristics

MR: Starts at 100. At least half of this score is assumed to be due to the creature’s Ch. This is the aura of maliciousness and evil that Bone Lords cannot help but project towards those nearby, even if the Bone Lord knows he has been seen. Most of the other half can be assumed to stem from Wiz, Dx, and Lk scores.

Aarmor: Special (see below).

Special Abilities

- * These creatures have all the knowledge of a 14th level Wizard, as most were Wizards before they became walking skeletons. They often do not have the stats, though, to cast more than a few lower-level spells. Just as they had to in life, Bone Lords must work toward the prerequisites.
- * Bone Lords have a natural OGA spell. Each target must make a successful SR against half his or her MR or become too terrified to function, if not blindly running away.
- * Due to their skeletal makeup, only half of physical damage affects them.
- * Though its essence is bound to its skeleton, a Bone Lord, if destroyed, may possess a living being by overcoming the target’s In and Ch with its original MR. The possessed person will then start to reconstruct a bone body for itself, and it will require its original skull. Such possessions must be re-rolled every sunset; if the infernal creature fails, it dissipates into nothingness.





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UPCOMING T&T RELEASES FROM KHAGHBOOMM

Following up from Pressure Drop – available now for just \$1 (which goes to the Jeff Freels Fund) via DriveThru RPG, watch out for more releases this side of 2013!



November – ‘**Deathbed**’ and ‘**Ranger Than Fiction**’ – two short solitaire adventures, back to back for double the trouble – to be found at DriveThru RPG. ‘**Deathbed**’ is a case of ‘what you see is what you get’ but maybe there’s a rocky road back...

‘**Ranger Than Fiction**’ is a case of a one track mind gone too far (or perhaps more than one mind) – a statistical essay in whimsy.

December (hold off one all those Christmas presents a while longer) – ‘**Deception: Strangebrew’s Chambers of the Unknown**’



With cover art by Grum-lahk (Jeff Freels) and more new art to boot, this is an old style ‘mad wizard in dungeon’ adventure with a second option for the claustrophobic and those who think 28 is the magic number. Some 60 pages and 23,000 words, give or take, it should get you through the holidays in good heart and maybe good health (all proceeds to boost Jeff’s health).

Contact mark.findlayrd@gmail.com or via Trollhalla trollmail (Khaghboommm)

CREATURE FEATURE II

Woe Hound

by Jerry Teleha

WOH-MATON WAS KNOWN throughout the land as a Vizier in the city of Baru-Kesh, a trusted advisor to the Sultan with great power and influence. He was also a Wizard of some renown. When he decided to leave the service of the Sultan, he retreated to the Great Forest, where he built a stronghold deep within. To help protect the land he claimed as his own, Woh-Maton created his hounds. Dark magic perverted and transformed normal hounds into his guardians. Those who lived to tell the tale soon spread word of these strange hounds prowling deep within the Great Forest, breathing fire and viciously attacking with powerful jaws, sharp claws, and barbed tails.

The original hounds were bred with specific powers and abilities. To his delight, "Woh's Hounds" began to successfully breed, and the tainted attributes of the original creations were transferred through the litters, generation after generation. Each hound inherits different natural abilities of the original creations, and no two hounds are ever alike. Woe Hounds can grow to be up to 12 feet in length and 3 feet broad at the shoulders. Their powerful jaws can snap bones, and some have breath weapons of fire or acid. Their claws can rip open unarmored flesh with a single stroke, and their tails can be spiked or barbed. Most Woe Hounds encountered tend to have brown or reddish-brown skin, although some have been seen with grey, black, or green hides.

The hounds became as feared as the Wizard, and soon the common folk of the region knew to stay away from Woh-Maton's woods. Trading routes through

the forest altered course to steer very clear of the Wizard and his lands. Anyone fool enough to seek out the Wizard and the treasure he was rumored to own was never heard from again. In recent years, the hounds have been sighted outside of the Wizard's land, in other areas of the Great Forest and beyond. Some believe that this is a sign the old Wizard is finally dead and that with him went the power to control his beasts.

Woe Hounds prefer to live in deep forests and are rarely seen in deserts or mountainous areas, though they could adapt to and live in most any natural environment. They have keen senses, are very intelligent, and are skilled hunters, able to relentlessly track and harass their prey. Woe Hounds have been bred to attack any creature with which they come in contact. Typically, these hounds are not afraid to attack anything they believe they could possibly bring down, from a single ogre to a group of human-sized kindred.

When encountered, Woe Hounds are normally in mated pairs. When a pair of Woe Hounds produces a litter, they will retreat to a cave or other such secure den and reduce their ranging to better protect their young. Once the pups in the litter are old enough, they are turned away by the parents and forced to find their own territory. The litters are typically small, consisting of no more than three or four pups. It is believed that if Woe Hound pups are captured at a young age, they can be trained to serve as guardians.



There is usually no more than a single female in any litter. Because of this, a small pack of young males may also be encountered, but this is a rare occurrence. More often than not, male members of a litter will fight to the death over the female when they are abandoned by their parents. Rarer still would be a lone female leading a pack of males. The largest pack of Woe Hounds is believed to exist on Woh-Maton's original land in the Great Forest. Some say that this pack may be as large as five different mated pairs. Whether they are still bound to the land by the Wizard is unknown.

WOE HOUND (ADULT)

Stats and Attributes

All Adult Woe Hounds have the following base statistics and attributes:

MR 85 (9d6+42)
 St 30
 Con 85
 Wiz 20

Armor: Hide (4 pts)

Special Abilities: Optional (see below)

Special Damage: 1 / Woeful Attack (2)

Special Defense: Optional (see below)

Appearing: 2, mated pair

The charts below may be used to randomly determine the attributes of a Woe Hound. As always, the GM should use any combination of options that would best fit the scenario or encounter. It may be best to limit each Woe Hound to one Special Ability or Special Defense, in order to limit the amount of extra bookkeeping needed and to keep combat running smoothly and simply, as T&T combat *should* run.

d6	Level	Classification	Base MR	Stats
1-2	1	Juvenile	60 (7d6+30)	St 20, Con 60, Wiz 15
3-5	2	Adult	85 (9d6+42)	St 30, Con 85, Wiz 20
6	3	Pack Leader	110 (12d6+55)	St 40, Con 110, Wiz 25

d6	Gender	Details
1-4	Male	If encountered in a mated pair, add 10 to the MR
5	Female	If encountered alone, add 10 to the MR
6	Female	If encountered in a small pack, add 20 to the MR

d6	Armor	Details
1-2	Hide (4 pts)	Nothing special: just a tough, leathery hide
3	Scale (6 pts)	Immune to fire attacks
4	Hide (4 pts)	Resist Magic
5	Hide (4 pts)	Chameleon
6	Scale (6 pts)	Shield Me
d6	Tail	Details
1-3	Normal	Nothing special: just a tail, good for balancing
4-5	Barbed Tail	+2d6 to damage
6	Tail Spikes	+1d6 to damage, Missile Attack
d6	Special Attack	Details
1-2	Fiery Breath	2 / Call Flame
3-4	Acid Bile	3 / Dragon Venom
5	Fiery Blast	Blasting Power, ranged attack, 1x/day
6	Acid Spittle	Acid Spray, ranged attack, 1x/day

Woeful Attack

Vicious attacks with sharp claws and teeth result in double the normal Spite Damage. For every six rolled, two points of Spite Damage are delivered instead of the standard one.

Armor

Woe Hounds will typically have either a tough hide or scale-hide mixed armor with the following special abilities:

Immune to Fire: Any attacks that deal fire damage are ignored.

Resist Magic: As the 5th level spell: the first single-target spell that successfully strikes the Woe Hound is ignored.

Chameleon: Hide will change with its surroundings, increasing the SR values for attempts to spot or avoid ambush.

Shield Me: As the 3rd level spell: spell damage is absorbed by the hound's Wiz value until depleted.

Tail

Some Woe Hounds have enhanced tails that add to the base damage of melee attacks and could add a ranged attack as well:

Barbed Tail: The tail is like a living flail, which adds an additional 2d6 to the hound's combat dice.

Tail Spikes: The tail is laced with a series of growing spikes, which adds an additional 1d6 to the hound's combat dice. Tail spikes can be used as

missile attacks (up to three times a day) that deal $1d6+(Wiz)$ damage. An SR based on range is required, using the Wiz of the Woe Hound (instead of Dx), to hit its target.

Special Attacks

A Woe Hound may also have an enhanced bite or breath attack. Fiery Breath and Acid Bile are delivered as Spite Damage in melee combat. Since all Woe Hounds have the standard Spite Damage for Woeful Attack, these attacks do not stack, but may be split (for example, if 3 Spite Damage is rolled for a hound with Fiery Breath, $1d6$ fire damage is rolled and an additional 2 points Spite Damage is incurred for the Woeful Attack). Separate Spite Damage effects may be split between different targets.

Fiery Breath: As the 1st level spell “Call Flame”: $1d6$ fire damage to a single target (bypassing armor).

Acid Bile: As the poison “Dragon Venom”: 4 damage to a single target (bypassing armor), and all armor reduced by 2 hits.

Fiery Blast: Similar to the 3rd level spell “Blasting Power”; the hound can emit a bolt of magical fire up to 70 feet, armor applicable. The hound must succeed on a 1st lvl SR Wiz for the attack to hit its target. Damage for the attack is based on the level of the Woe Hound. This attack can be used 1x/day.

Level 1, Juvenile: $1d6+15$ damage

Level 2, Adult: $2d6+20$ damage

Level 3, Pack Leader: $3d6+25$ damage

Acid Spittle: Like Fiery Blast, but a stream of acid is spewed that can hit multiple targets up to 30 feet away, armor applicable. A successful 1st lvl SR Wiz is required for the attack to hit its target(s). The number of targets that can be hit is based on the Woe Hound’s level; e.g., a 3rd level hound can hit three targets. Damage to each target is $2d6$, and all armor is reduced by 2 hits. This attack can be used 1x/day.



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The
CURSE
of the
THREE-EYED
STONE

by David R. Crowell

This solo takes place in a setting drawn from the folklore of ancient China and Japan. Characters of any kindred and profession may be used. There are no specific provisions for spell casting; use your own best judgment as to spell effects in play. It is worth noting that magical means to locate or retrieve the main objective of the adventure simply will NOT work. If it was as easy as merely casting a spell, there would be no story, would there?

1 "You are a thief. You steal things. I want you to steal something for me. It is small, no bigger than your hand. No guards. Very simple. You walk in, pick it up, walk out. No problem for you. I pay when you get back."





Christopher Lee Rowan

Crow 2012

That sounds simple, maybe too simple. "Smaller than your hand" usually means about the size of a panda. As for "no guards," you are sure he meant seven ravenous tigers. Still, it's a job, and you're getting pretty sick of an empty rice bowl. Surely it couldn't hurt to ask a little more...

"So, you take the job? Good! You start now. Go to the shop of XiaoDa. Bring me back the three-eyed ink stone. Why are you still here? Go! Go!"

You find yourself ushered out onto the street beside the canal without quite understanding what it is you have agreed to. Something about a three-eyed stone and XiaoDa, whoever that is?

Go to **2**.

2 Not knowing exactly what the three-eyed stone might be nor who XiaoDa is, you decide a little research is in order before you start the job. Like any good freelancer, you have built up a network of contacts.

You figure the best option for finding out about the three-eyed stone is to start with someone who knows stones and gems well: YuBao the jade merchant. He has a fondness for the merchandise you bring him and the lining it gives his purse. To visit him, go to **3**.

To find out about a person, you often listen to the gossip at the tea shops and taverns to overhear what is being said. For the tea shops, visit **4**; for the taverns, go to **5**.

The other source of information on everything in the city of SuZhou is the records of the magistrates. For a small fee, any citizen may have the records searched on any subject wished. To try this, go to **6**.

3 The jade merchant is a refined old gentleman. His brow develops a crease when he sees you walk into his stall filled with small and valuable, not to mention easily pocketable, items. You flash him a broad smile and wave. "Hello, my old friend. Today I do not have an interest in your wares. No, you needn't gulp like a carp at that. I come looking for information. What can you tell me of a stone with three eyes?"

Instead of the surprised curiosity you had expected, YuBao begins to laugh. It is just a chuckle at first, but soon he is gasping and tears are smearing the lenses of his spectacles.

"Painting?" he gasps. "No, calligraphy"...puff, wheeze..."Surely not, poetry!" Here he collapses, utterly helpless with convulsions of merriment.

"What are you on about, you old fool?" you snap, not liking being the butt of an apparent joke. "I asked about a stone. A gem. Not some silly scrap of paper with the musings of an ancient fool on it."

Slowly he pulls himself together. "Have you not heard of the 'Four Treasures'? No, I suppose you wouldn't have."

The mention of "treasures" improves your patience. You gesture for him to continue.

"The Four Treasures are the tools of the scholarly gentleman. Paper, ink, brush, and ink stone. Even a lout like you doubtless knows that ink comes in dried sticks that must be ground out with water before they are used. The best-quality stones have lighter markings on them called 'eyes.' Usually only one, but a superior stone may have two. A stone with three eyes would be a treasure indeed. But what would an illiterate like you want with such a fine stone?"

"Better not to ask such a question," you remind him.

So, the "three-eyed stone" is likely to be an ink stone. This makes it more likely that it is indeed "smaller than your hand," but if it is truly as valuable as YuBao has said, it is extremely unlikely that it has been left unguarded.

If you wish to learn more about ink stones and the Four Treasures, you may visit the street of writing shops at **7**.

To find out about a person, you often listen to the gossip at the tea shops and taverns. Perhaps something is being said of XiaoDa and his stone. For the tea shops, visit **4**; for the taverns, go to **5**.

The most detailed source of information on everything in SuZhou is the records of the magistrates. For a small fee, any citizen may have the records searched on any subject wished. To try this, go to **6**.

4 The tea shops are popular gathering places for all classes of citizen. They offer refreshing tea, light dining, and pleasant company. They are also an excellent place for a fellow with sharp ears to overhear all sorts of information that might otherwise be considered confidential. You spend a pleasant afternoon sampling the delights of the tea shops and listening for news. You pick up several bits of information that you file away for future use: affairs of the heart, an exclusive poetry party that is sure to include drunkenness and easy picking for pickpockets, and a few words about XiaoDa. Your target, it seems, is a very wealthy man. He maintains a small shop on the street of writing shops but conducts his main business from his estate. He is well known as the man to see for valuable and unusual scholars' treasures.

With this information in hand, you may go to the magistrate's offices for XiaoDa's addresses at **6**, the taverns for more gossip of a lower sort at **5**, the street of writing shops at **7**, or XiaoDa's estate at **12**.

5 The taverns and wine shops cater to a rougher crowd. Porters, laborers, and peasants as well as off-duty soldiers may be found here at all hours. You troll through several dives, buying drinks and striving to avoid unwanted attention. Eventually, with your purse somewhat lighter and your head definitely the heavier, you are able to make your way home.

XiaoDa is well known, if not well thought of. Your informants all agree that he is rich. Beyond that, it is less certain. The more creditable rumors tie him to organized crime, smuggling, and unsavory activities. Those deeper in their cups or having an axe to grind whisper less savory tales, hinting at necromancy, consorting with demons, and sorcery most foul.

With this information in hand, you may go to the magistrate's offices for XiaoDa's addresses at **6**, the tea shops for gossip of a more genteel sort at **4**, the street of writing shops at **7**, or XiaoDa's estate at **12**.

6 The magistrate's offices are a hive of activity. A swarm of clerks buzz about like bees. Scrolls are piled on every surface and cascade to the floor. You take your place in the line and slowly wait until at last you are in front of a clerk, who asks your business. "XiaoDa: where is his shop and his home? Has he imported anything of note recently?" A bit blunt perhaps, but the clerks of the magistrate are well known for not inquiring into the inquiries of others. You pay the search fee and receive in exchange a numbered tablet. Now you must wait until your number is called; then you will learn all about XiaoDa.

After what seems an excruciating and interminable wait, your number is at last called. You follow a clerk into a consulting room. Spread before you are heaps of documents written in the dense calligraphy used by the records keepers. You are easily able to get the addresses of his home and business, but his business records are not so easy: scroll after scroll of columns detailing brushes, paper, ink sticks, ink stones, and the occasional special item—incense, silk, jade... It could take weeks to go through it all. You are satisfied that he is indeed a dealer in fine ink stones and that he could have such a stone, but as to its whereabouts, you will have to check his house and his shop to see. You may visit the house at **12** or the shop at **11**. You may also listen to the gossip in the tea houses at **4**, frequent the taverns at **5**, or visit the street of writing shops at **7**.

7 The street of writing shops is a long winding alley. Both sides are lined with stalls and shops selling every conceivable writing implement and supply: brushes, paper, ink, ink stones, paints, paperweights, brush racks, seals, wax, and some things whose purposes and uses you cannot

begin to guess. You decide to overlook the brushes and papers for now. You are interested in ink stones: one special stone in particular.

To ask a merchant about ink stones with eyes, go to **8**; to inquire after XiaoDa, go to **9**.

8 You step into a likely looking shop, chosen mostly because it offers a broad array of ink stones. Indeed, it has stones of all sizes, from those the size of a man's thumbnail to gigantic stones that could serve as tables. Some of the stones are plain and simple; others are decorated with carvings in relief or sculpted into fantastic shapes. The motif of a buffalo drinking or bathing in a pool of ink seems a popular one. Most of the stones are dark grey or black, but there is also a rainbow of hues of jade and a scattering of stones in other colours, including one that looks to be of bone or ivory, although you have never heard of a beast that large.

Seeing you fumble among the stones with a bewildered look, a clerk approaches and takes your elbow with a bow. "How may I be of service, esteemed customer?"

"Err, I was just browsing these fine stones," you stammer. To inquire about stones with eyes, go to **10**; to ask directions to the shop of XiaoDa, go to **9**.

9 You step into one of the shops and attract the attention of a clerk. "XiaoDa?" you ask, as though the name is not well known to you. "Does he have a shop near here?"

"Yes. You will find him just up the street. But it is likely he will not be there. He is a recluse and usually has an assistant tend his shop. That is all I can say of him. A good day to you, sir."

It is strange; the clerk had seemed quite friendly until you mentioned XiaoDa.

You may visit XiaoDa in his shop at **11** or go to the magistrate's offices to find any records about him at **6**. If you wish to listen to gossip in the tea shops, go to **4**; for the taverns, go to **5**.

10 "What can you tell me about stones with eyes?"

"Ah, nothing but the finest for you then, sir. You must be a scholar from the Court? Perhaps sir is traveling incognito? Well, any flat surface may be used for grinding ink, but the finest stones are the Duanxi, especially those with eyes. Here, I will show you."

The clerk picks up a small wooden box and opens it to reveal a purple-red stone a little broader than a man's hand. Staring up from the middle is a tawny spot, the eye.

“It is the mark of a very fine stone to have an eye: very fortunate for the writer. A very lucky stone will have two eyes. Such stones are of course very precious.”

You thank the clerk for his information and browse among the stones for a while longer. You find that, as he said, most stones have no eyes, a few have one, and a very scant handful have two.

“Do any stones ever have three eyes?” you ask, trying to sound like a scholar shopping for something special.

The clerk straightens at your question. “A three-eyed stone would be a rare treasure indeed. A stone fit for the Emperor himself. I do not know of even a single such stone available for sale here. I have not even heard of a scholar possessing one. If any would know of such a stone, it would be XiaoDa, but he is...*different*...and not a man to deal with lightly.”

“XiaoDa?” you ask as though the name is unknown to you. “Does he have a shop near here?”

“Yes. You will find him just up the street. But it is likely he will not be there. He is a recluse and usually has an assistant tend his shop. That is all I can say of him. A good day to you, sir.”

It is strange: the clerk had seemed quite friendly until you inquired further about XiaoDa. You may visit XiaoDa in his shop at **11** or go to the magistrate's offices to locate any records about him at **6**. If you wish to listen to gossip in the tea shops, go to **4**; for the taverns, go to **5**.

11 The shop of XiaoDa is much like the others on the street. There is a wide array of writing implements available.

You browse brushes made of both common and exotic hairs. Surely the “Phoenix Tail Brush” is a poetically named rooster tail? Although you must admit you have never seen a rooster with plumage quite that colour before.

Ink sticks pressed into delicate sculptures, gilded and set with precious stones, are surely meant as decorative gifts, not for actual use.

Then, finally, you find yourself gazing at the ink stones. Light ones, dark ones, red, grey, jade, all shapes and sizes. No eyes, one eye, two eyes, but nowhere a stone with three eyes.

When the clerk appears, you enquire as subtly as may be about the delicate subject of a stone with eyes. A gift, you intimate, to an important personage. What can he suggest for a fine stone? As expected, he offers you stones with single eyes and with double, but none is the stone you seek. “Is there, perhaps, a stone possessed of three eyes?” you ask.

The clerk's eyes widen for a moment; then he says, “No! Most certainly not. Where did you hear rumor of such a thing? If we had one, we

would be beset by every thief in the Empire! Such a stone would make the fortune of any man lucky enough to find it and keep it."

You sense that he is lying; his denials seem a little too strong and fast.

"Well, I am sorry you were not able to help me," you say casually. "I was told that XiaoDa had the finest stones in the city, but now I am not sure. Perhaps I should enquire of Mr..."

Before you can even form the name of a possible rival, the clerk bursts out, "No! No! Do not think of troubling yourself with any inferior stones. I see now you are a man of great discernment. Perhaps you would do well to speak with XiaoDa yourself."

You thank the clerk for his assistance and quickly leave. "Yes," you think to yourself, "I will pay a call on XiaoDa."

You may proceed to the estate at **12**.

If you wish to learn more about ink stones and the Four Treasures, you may visit the street of writing shops at **7**.

To find out about a person, you often listen to the gossip at the tea shops and taverns. Perhaps something is being said of XiaoDa and his stone. For the tea shops, visit **4**; for the taverns, go to **5**.

The most detailed source of information on everything in SuZhou is the records of the magistrates. For a small fee, any citizen may have the records searched on any subject wished. To try this, go to **6**.

12 XiaoDa lives in a large walled estate with extensive gardens. The door warden tells you that the merchant is not seeing anyone without an appointment, and that he is not making appointments until after the lantern boat festival. You cannot wait that long, and making an appointment would leave a record of your coming that you would rather do without. You decide to revisit the estate by night at **13**.

13 Dropping lightly over the wall, you find yourself in the gardens at the rear of the estate. A stand of bamboo screens you from view. Looking across the gardens reveals paths bordered with smooth, white pebbles. Several beds of gravel have been raked into formal patterns around large, irregular scholar rocks. Stands of bamboo, twisted trees, and ponds for lotus and carp complete the landscaping.

There is plenty of cover for slipping from shadow to shadow. Before starting across, you take a quick look for guards; none seem present. The lack of guards is puzzling rather than reassuring; nevertheless, the house is waiting. Testing that your sword is loose in the scabbard and your shoes are secure on your feet, you step out.

Halfway across, you freeze. Was that a flicker of movement over there by the bamboo? No, just the shadows of the stems bending in the breeze. Breeze? The night is still, so why do the shadows move?

Stripy shadows slink across the lawn...Tiger! The stalking cat has an MR of 95 (10d6+48, Special Damage 1/1, normal Spite). If you defeat the tiger, go to **14**. If you are slain, go to **15**.

14 You wipe your blade on the tawny carcass and resume your prowl. Hopefully the noise of the fight did not reach the house. You will know soon enough. Go to **16**.

15 You feel your lifeblood draining away and your sight growing dim. Your chi gathers itself and rises in a shadowy copy of your former shape. Having died with your mission unfulfilled, you are now condemned to wander as a hungry ghost. The End.

16 You steal up to the house. The front door will surely be locked, but perhaps a kitchen door has been left ajar by a wandering servant. As you walk to the rear of the house, you spy a window shutter that has been left ajar to catch the night breeze. You may try to enter here (go to **17**) or you may continue towards the kitchen at **18**.

17 Jumping up, you catch the edge of the window. Swiftly you scramble up the wall and onto the windowsill. Go to **49**.

18 Stealthily you make your way to the back of the house. There is an attached kitchen. Perhaps here you can find a way in. As you enter the kitchen, you see a glow of coals and a shadowy form. Someone is awake!

By the hearth, an old man is preparing tea. He looks up, apparently unsurprised by your presence. "I was just about to take tea. Would you care to join me?" To draw a weapon and attack the old man, hoping to kill him swiftly and silently, go to **19**. To sit down to take tea with him, go to **20**.

19 You are on a mission and care not for hospitality. You swing your blade in a swift attack at the old man. He recoils spryly and dashes the hot kettle in your face as he snatches up two cleavers and stands to face you. As he stands, he grows taller. What you had taken to be an

old man is revealed as an ogre. His skin is midnight blue, and a pair of red horns sprouts from his forehead. The ogre's MR is 125 (12d6+63). If you defeat him, go to **21**. If he kills you, go to **15**.

20 The old man smiles at you as you seat yourself. "This is a most excellent tea. So fine, in fact, that none who drink of it ever want to drink another tea again. Let me pour you a cup so you can taste." He fills two cups of bone china and passes one to you. The tea is fragrant with a strange scent and deep red in colour. If you drink the cup, go to **22**. If you only pretend to drink, go to **23**. If you refuse to drink, go to **24**.

21 The ogre falls, his body dissolving into smoke. Was he in the employ of the house or here on mischief of his own? You have no way of knowing. You may take his cleavers if you wish, and enough of his tea remains to brew three doses of poison.

If you take the cleavers, go to **26**. Otherwise, you may enter the house at **27**, investigate the fish pond at **31**, or explore the rest of the garden at **56**.

22 The tea is poison! Make a 2nd lvl SR Con. If you fail the SR, take as many hits as you failed the SR by and then, if you are still alive, go to **25**. If you pass the SR, go to **23**. If you are killed by the poison, go to **15**.

23 The old man looks surprised for a moment, then pours you another cup. "Here, drink more; it will refresh you." He recoils spryly and dashes the hot kettle in your face as he snatches up two cleavers and stands to face you. As he stands, he grows taller. What you had taken to be an old man is revealed as an ogre. His skin is midnight blue, and a pair of red horns sprouts from his forehead. The ogre's MR is 125 (12d6+63). If you defeat him, go to **21**. If he kills you, go to **15**.

24 "You need a lesson in manners!" He recoils spryly and dashes the hot kettle in your face as he snatches up two cleavers and stands to face you. As he stands, he grows taller. What you had taken to be an old man is revealed as an ogre. His skin is midnight blue, and a pair of red horns sprouts from his forehead. The ogre's MR is 125 (12d6+63). If you defeat him, go to **21**. If he kills you, go to **15**.

25 "Did you not enjoy the tea? I have something else for you!" He recoils spryly and dashes the hot kettle in your face as he snatches up two

cleavers and stands to face you. As he stands, he grows taller. What you had taken to be an old man is revealed as an ogre. His skin is midnight blue, and a pair of red horns sprouts from his forehead. The ogre's MR is 125 (12d6+63). If you defeat him, go to **21**. If he kills you, go to **15**.

26 Each cleaver is a 3d6+1 magical weapon. A character can wield one in each hand at the same time. They will damage any foe, including ghosts and spirits. They inflict double Spite Damage. You may enter the house at **27**, investigate the fish pond at **31**, or explore the rest of the garden at **56**.

27 From the kitchen, it is an easy step to the rear entrance of the house. You listen closely but hear no sound from within. Cautiously you push open the door and step inside. To your right is a low shelf for footwear. On the left is a set of pegs for capes and hats. You are in a short passage with doors straight ahead, to your left, and to your right. Make a note if you choose to remove your shoes, and then pick a door.

The door straight ahead is at **28**, the door to the right is at **29**, and the door to the left is at **30**.

28 This door opens into a long passage that seems to run the length of the house. Soft, woven mats cover the floor. There are three doors on the left-hand side of the passage and two doors on the right. Midway between the two doors on the right, a candle lantern hangs, emitting enough light to see by. On either side of the centre door on the left side hangs a cricket cage.

The first door on the left is at **53**, the centre door on the left is at **54**, and the far door on the left is at **73**. The first door on the right is at **62**, and the second door on the right is at **52**.

29 Beyond this door is a storeroom. There are stoneware jugs and jars, large wooden chests and kegs, and small cloth-wrapped bundles on shelves, as well as jars of alabaster and jade. If you wish to search this room for ink stones, go to **60**. Otherwise, return to **27** and choose a different door.

30 This door opens into a fine banquet room. Soft mats cover the floor, and several low benches surround the low tables where meals are served. Places are carefully set with lacquered rice bowls and delicate chopsticks on jade rests. A fine tea cup sits at each place as well.

You enter the room and are quickly able to determine that the prize you seek is not here. There are two doors leading out of this room. The left door leads to **28**, the right door to **27**.

31 The fish pond is a largish pool that looks to be about waist deep at its centre. Stepping stones form a path across one end, and a bridge arcs over the stream that feeds the pool. You can see the forms of a school of flashy ornamental carp swimming lazily in the shallows. You may investigate the fish more closely at **32**, visit the bamboo groves at **56**, or enter the house at **27**.

32 Koi in the pool seem to sparkle and shine especially brightly. If you try to catch one, roll a 3rd lvl SR Dx or Sp. If you succeed, go to **33**; if not, go to **34**.

33 Your fishing technique, although unorthodox, pays off. You are able to snatch one of the fish from the pool. It is colder and harder than you expected it to be. Examining it more closely, you find that its scales are of silver and gold metal. The fish, which was swimming actively, lies inert in your hand.

If you release it back into the pool, go to **35**. If you dip it in the pool without releasing it, go to **36**. If you store it away to examine later, go to **37**.

34 You plunge your arm into the pool, grasping for a fish. You feel its cold scales just brush the tips of your fingers. Maybe if you lean just a little farther...SPLASH! You overbalance and fall into the pool. Go to **39**.

35 You drop the metal fish back into the pool. It sinks straight for the bottom, then with a flick of its fins swims away. Go to **39**.

36 The fish weighs heavily in your hand. When it touches the water its fins begin to swirl and its tail to thrash. Startled, you lift it out again, and it becomes inert once more. If you return the fish to its pool, go to **35**; if you tuck it away for now, go to **37**.

37 You tuck the curious fish away for now. You will examine it more closely later. Make a note to read **38** after you finish the adventure. Go to **39**.



38 This is a fine and rare treasure indeed: a jeweled carp fashioned of copper, silver, and gold, with gems for eyes. When placed in water, the carp comes to life and swims about like a normal fish. Remove it from the water, and it becomes inert metal. You cannot think of a more practical use for it than as a fancy ornament, but, still, you are sure you could sell it in the market for a substantial sum if ever you fall on hard times.

39 You look up and see a small man or child watching you. He wears a large turtle's shell, and the top of his head is strangely flat. He is munching on a large cucumber. "What do you plan to do with the fish?" he asks. "You can't eat it, you know." He takes another bite of cucumber. If you wish to continue conversing with the strange little man, go to **40**. To sneak in the back door, go to **27**. To investigate the rest of the garden, go to **56**. If you are of a violent inclination and wish to attack him, go to **61**.

40 You look closer at this strange little fellow. His skin is green and slightly scaled; the turtle shell you had taken for a garment seems to be a natural growth. Strangest of all, the top of his head is sunken like a shallow bowl. This bowl is filled with clear water, although his black hair is quite dry. You have heard fairy tales of creatures such as this, the kappa. You have heard that if the water in the top of their heads is spilled they become unable to move. But how to get him to spill the water?

"I do not eat goldfish," you reply, "nor does fishing bring me to the garden tonight."

"I can see you are not a fisherman, and you are likely not a gardener either. So what does bring you to the garden tonight? Perhaps you are a poet? Is that it? Shall we have a contest of poetry?"

Poetry writing, the very thing to help obtain some information from this creature. "Yes, I should like nothing better than to exchange poems, but sadly I have no stone to grind my ink upon."

The little man looks at you slyly and winks. "Not to worry; I carry my ink stone with me wherever I go." With that he pulls out a stick of ink and begins grinding it in the top of his head. When the ink is ready, he dips a brush in it and hands it to you.

"Shall I give the fist line?" he asks.

The two of you compose a fine poem, alternating lines.

The turtle-man pours wine in small porcelain cups and is a merry companion, but it is clear that he will provide no further information about the three-eyed ink stone.



After you finish visiting with him, you may sneak in the back door at **27** or investigate the rest of the garden at **56**.

41 You open the door and find yourself in a lady's antechamber. The sliding panel to the chamber beyond is slightly ajar. You can hear a sound of rustling fabric behind the panel.

To step up and peek through the gap, go to **42**. To boldly enter the chamber beyond the panel, go to **43**. To discreetly retire to the corridor, go to **47**.

42 You put your eye to the gap. Peering through, you see a chamber lit by candles. A veiled lady sits making her toilette. Deftly she wields the brush, which she dips in a pot of paint and applies to the garment in her lap. But, what lady makes her toilette by painting her lap instead of her face? She raises the garment in her lap for a closer inspection, and you see to your shock that she has painted a lovely maiden's face on it. She stands and lets her veil slip to the floor. With a gasp, you realize that she is no maid but a withered and dessicated corpse. With deft movements, she slips on the skin she was painting and stands before a large mirror as a fair beauty. You may continue to watch at **44**, burst into the chamber at **45**, or discreetly retire to the corridor at **47**.

43 You step boldly into the chamber beyond. Seated before you is a veiled maiden making toilette. As you enter, she springs up and whirls to face you. A garment slips to the floor at her feet, and she tears back her veil to reveal the putrid green visage of a decayed corpse. With a shriek she leaps at you, teeth and claws bared! Go to **51**.

44 As you continue to watch, the maiden smooths her skin and touches up her makeup.

She turns to a wardrobe and dons fine silk garments. Dressed and made up, she turns to the door. You may withdraw into the corridor at **47** or remain to confront her in the antechamber at **48**.

45 You dash forwards. Rushing into the chamber, you upset a bronze tripod bearing incense. The crash of its falling alerts the corpse-maiden. She turns and springs at you, still seeming a comely lass, but for the terrible fangs distending her jaws and the claws protruding raggedly from her fingertips. Her skin begins to tear loose in splits and tatters, revealing the corpse beneath. Go to **51**.

46 You enter a dimly lit chamber. From the corner of your eye, you catch sight of several headless people standing in a group. Your hand flies to your weapon! Wait, you almost attacked a court dress hanging on a bamboo frame. No threat there. Chuckling to yourself, you look more carefully around the room. It appears to be a dressing room and wardrobe. A folding screen of painted silk stands in one corner. You hear the rustle of garments from behind it. It seems you are not alone here after all.

As you watch, a comely maid steps from behind the screen. She smiles at you in greeting, seeming quite unsurprised at your presence.

You may return her greeting at **64**, attack her at **65**, or simply use the door into the house at **28** or out to the garden at **66**.

47 You chose the moment of your retirement none too soon. Barely have you closed the door behind you than it opens again. Out of the chamber steps a fair young maiden, demurely dressed. She startles at seeing a stranger in the house. You may speak to her and attempt to bluff your way past at **50** or draw a weapon and attack her at **51**.

48 You ready your weapon and wait in the shadows of the antechamber. You have scarcely had time to take your position when the screen slides back and the corpse-maiden steps through. Even at this close distance you spot nothing amiss in her appearance. You step forward to accost her. She turns and springs at you, still seeming a comely lass, but for the terrible fangs distending her jaws and the claws protruding raggedly from her fingertips. Her skin begins to tear loose in splits and tatters, revealing the corpse beneath. Go to **51**.

49 From your perch on the windowsill, you are peering into a banquet room. Soft mats cover the floor, and several low benches surround the low tables where meals are served. Places are carefully set with lacquered rice bowls and delicate chopsticks on jade rests. A fine tea cup sits at each place as well.

You enter the room and are quickly able to determine that the prize you seek is not here. There are two doors leading out of this room. The left door leads to **28**, the right door to **27**.

50 You raise your weapons and look at her sternly. "There is an intruder in the house, ma'am," you say in an authoritative tone. "Please return to your chamber while I locate and despatch him."

She smiles at this and says, "I do not think this intruder will present any problems." She turns and springs at you, still seeming a comely lass, but for the terrible fangs distending her jaws and the claws protruding raggedly from her fingertips. Her skin begins to tear loose in splits and tatters, revealing the corpse beneath. Go to **51**.

51 You find yourself in combat with a terrible foe: a rotting corpse wearing the skin of a young maiden. Corpse hag: MR 245 (25d6+123), Special Damage 6/Befuddle. If she kills you, go to **15**. If you defeat her, you may search her chambers at **72** or return to the corridor at **28**.

52 You stand outside the last door on the right. Make a 2nd lvl SR Dx (1st lvl if you are in stocking feet). If you pass, go to **63**; if you fail, go to **69**.

53 You are standing outside the first door. If you want to listen at it, make a 1st lvl SR Lk, and go to **58** if you pass. If you fail the SR, you hear nothing. You may open the door at **30** or return to the corridor at **28** and choose a different door.

54 You are standing outside the centre door. If you want to listen at it, make a 1st lvl SR Lk, and go to **59** if you pass. If you fail the SR, you hear nothing. You may open the door at **41** or return to the corridor at **28** and choose a different door. If you would like to examine the cricket cages, go to **55**.

55 On either side of this door hangs a small cage made of lacquered bamboo. Cages of this sort are often used to house crickets. The crickets are thought to bring good fortune and are also sometimes pitted against one another in cricket-fighting matches. These cages contain an especially fine looking pair of large, black crickets. They seem to be in all respects normal, healthy crickets.

If you want to listen at the door, make a 1st lvl SR Lk, and go to **59** if you pass. If you fail the SR, you hear nothing. You may open the door at **41** or return to the corridor at **28** and choose a different door.

56 The gardens are designed for peaceful contemplation. Small stands of bamboo, large scholar rocks, and small reflecting pools are interspersed with beds of raked sand and neatly trimmed grass. Out of the corner of your eye, you catch sight of a flash of tawny fur. Another

tiger! That seems unlikely to be roaming freely in a garden in the city, but the rich always play by their own rules. Cautiously, you edge around a scholar stone, trying to pierce the shadows of the bamboo stand where you glimpsed the prowling creature.

There! Another flash. Too small to be a tiger; what is it? Ah, a fox. You almost laugh out loud in relief. A fox is no threat to you.

As you watch, the fox scurries across the garden and slips into the house through a door that was left slightly ajar.

That is strange. Foxes do not usually enter houses, even at night. Perhaps it is tame, although you have not heard of pet foxes before.

You may follow the fox at **57**, enter the house at **27**, or investigate the fish pond at **31**.

57 You creep through the door, following the fox. The room you enter is dimly lit, and you see no immediate sign of the creature. Go to **46**.

58 You listen intently at the door but hear nothing from the other side. You may open the door at **30** or return to the corridor at **28** and choose a different door.

59 You listen intently at the door and hear the faint sound of a woman singing softly on the other side. You may open the door at **41** or return to the corridor at **28** and choose a different door.

60 You spend some time rummaging amongst the goods stored here. Although you find some odd curiosities and not a few small but valuable objects, it is clear that the ink stone you seek is not here. Go to **27** and choose a different door.

61 As you raise your weapon to strike him, the turtle-man gives a cry of fright and dives into the fish pond. You watch for him to surface, but he does not.

To sneak in the back door, go to **27**. To investigate the rest of the garden, go to **56**.

62 You are standing outside the first door on the right. If you wish to enter this room, go to **46**. Otherwise, return to the corridor at **28** and choose a different door.

63 As you step up to the door, you feel the floorboards shift under your feet. You are standing on a nightingale floor, designed to creak and sing loudly when stepped on. Fortunately you felt the boards starting to give and were able to shift your weight slowly enough to avoid triggering the alarm. You open the door to **70**.

64 "Ah, good evening, miss," you stammer. "A pleasant autumn night, is it not?"

She looks at you and smiles while raising one eyebrow provocatively. She raises her hand and seductively beckons you closer.

Well, this is certainly unexpected. Not at all the reaction you would anticipate from a maiden who encounters you creeping about her dressing room in the wee hours of the morning. Involuntarily, you take a step closer.

She licks her lips with a small red tongue, revealing keenly pointed white teeth. As she beckons you again, you catch a feral light in her amber eyes and a glimpse of a furry tail behind her that her dress has failed to cover.

Kitsune!, you suddenly realize. This is no ordinary maiden, but a fox spirit. They have a reputation of being tricksters, but are also said not to be evil. Their affections promise rare delights, but there is always a price to be paid. You face an unexpected choice. Do you allow yourself to be taken in by her charms (**67**), attack her as a supernatural creature that should not meddle with the world of humans (**65**), flee the house at **66**, or press past her to continue your mission at **68**?

65 You raise your weapon and advance on the maiden. She gives a cry of fright and dives for the open window! As she leaps, she shrinks and transforms. Her empty dress falls across the windowsill as a sleek fox runs off into the night. You may exit to the garden at **66** or the inside corridor at **28**.

66 You exit the house into the moonlit garden. You have had quite enough. Stealing an ink stone is one thing, but confronting demons and spirits in the house of a sorcerer is quite another. You are sure that a disappointed client will harm your reputation, but the tales you have to tell will go far toward countering that. No more working for scholars, you promise yourself as you head to the taverns for a fortifying cup of wine. The End.

67 The lure of romance with such an exotic and enticing beauty is too much for you. You slip into her embrace and forget for the nonce your current life and mission. Together the two of you slip into the garden and off to a new life. The End.

68 Thought of sharing life with such a maiden is alluring, but you hold fast to your purpose. "No. You are not for the likes of me," you sadly say and press past her to the corridor at **28**. She utters a noise of frustration and lets the dress fall as she resumes fox shape and slips off into the garden night.

69 You have stepped onto a section of a nightingale floor! The boards beneath your feet creak and sing loudly. All chance of surprising those who may be beyond the door is now gone. You ready your weapons and open the door to **70**.

70 This must be the study of XiaoDa. In the centre of the room facing the door is a large writing desk upon which sits the object of your quest. The three-eyed stone! It is carved in the shape of a demon or ogre's face, with each of the three light-coloured "eyes" forming one of the eyes of the face. You step forward eagerly and stuff it in your pouch. Now at last, you can collect your pay and put this whole affair behind you.

As you pick up the stone, you hear the sound of a heavy footfall behind you. You turn and look, but no one is there. Just the life-sized terra cotta sculptures of warriors that stand to either side of the door. Your nerves must be playing tricks on you. After all, statues don't move.

But, these are! Slowly they bend their clay arms and lower their all-too-real bronze dagger halberds at you. Terra cotta warriors: MR 149 (15d6+75), Special Damage 1/1, normal Spite Damage. Special: Take damage only from magical attacks. If the terra cotta warriors slay you, go to **15**. If you defeat them, go to **71**.

71 The two warriors are tough foes. Though made of pottery, they fight like flesh and bone. Your weapons strike home and it is like hitting jars of clay. The warriors chip instead of bleeding. As you kill them, they crash to the floor in a ruin of broken shards. You decide you had best flee before reinforcements show up. Swiftly you go to claim your reward at **75**.

72 A search of the chambers of the horrid corpse-maiden reveals nothing of value. Return to the corridor at **28**.

73 You enter this chamber and immediately spot the occupant sitting on a bench against the wall opposite the door. You realize you are in no danger of its raising the alarm over your presence: you are looking at a decapitated corpse.

You may enter the room to search at **74** or close the door and try another in the corridor at **28**.

74 You step into the chamber, allowing the door to close behind you. Approaching the corpse with caution, you notice two things that seem strangely amiss. The first is the lack of blood. You would expect a considerable amount of blood to be splashed and pooled around the room, but there is none. Neither is there any sign of struggle. The corpse just sits on the bench, leaning back against the wall. The second oddity that strikes you is the lack of the head.

You look over the room, seeking any cupboard or shelf that might contain either the head or the stone you are seeking, but except for the bench and its grisly occupant, the room is bare.

A tapping sound draws your gaze to the window. There, gazing in at you, is the head that should reside on the gruesome corpse's shoulders. As you watch in horrified fascination, the disembodied cranium floats into the chamber, dragging beneath it a tail of wetly gleaming viscera.

The hideous apparition dives straight at you to attack!

Floating head vampire: MR 245 (25d6+123), Special Damage 1/1, biting teeth do normal Spite Damage. Special abilities: Fly Me.

If it kills you, go to **15**. If you kill it, the head falls to floor; you may return to the corridor at **28** and pick a different door or flee out the window to **66**.

75 With great relief, you hand the stone over and exchange it for several nice jingling strings of coins. Swiftly you tuck the coins away and turn to leave before your patron changes his mind. As you slip out into the night, you are certain you see the stone slowly wink one of its eyes at you. The End.



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