

Quoth the Raven



100% of Your Bimonthly
Dose of Evil

Carnival Season

Welcome to the Freak Show!

It's that time of the year again. Well... not really. For those of us in the Northern Hemisphere, carnival season is coming early this year. There's nothing quite like a carnival; all of the sights and sounds bring out the child in all of us. The colours and the music fill us with wonderment, bombarding us with images both strange and wonderful. Whether it's a three-ringed circus, a county fair or a lively parade, a carnival is an unforgettable experience.

Yet there is a darker side to a carnival. The sights and sounds that fill us with wonder are often strange and alien. The masks of revellers can twist and warp, the sound of laughter haunts the mind. The people who travel with circuses and fairs are strange nomads, modern day gypsies who live outside of society and make their living off of outsiders. The visitor is a stranger in the carnival, surrounded in a sea of celebration, a person can be left alone with his terror. In Ravenloft there is no shortage of fiendish things lurking in the shadows of the merriment. Tricksters con gullible villagers, freaks crouch in filthy cages, and faceless clowns laugh at us from the darkness. The possibilities for evil are endless.

This issue is devoted to the Carnival. Inside you will find new rules regarding several aspects of the carnival, from the terrible twisting to mystifying mutants known as creepings. Anyone who intends to spend any time in the Carnival will find the contents of this issue helpful. Yet the issue doesn't stop with Ishold's collection of freaks and geeks, it covers a larger variety of traveling shows. From astounding artefacts in a traveling show to flashy magic acts, this issue has a lot to offer.

For those Masque of the Red Death fans out there this issue describes firearms for use in Gothic Earth, new firearm feats and a new qabal; the sinister syndicate known as PRIME. Some people may note that the Crossroads of Gothic Earth section has been dropped. Lack of public interest has slain this section, though rest assured that any submissions in the future will be published.

I'd like to thank all of our contributors for sending in their articles. We didn't get everything we were expecting, but what we did get blew our socks off. I'd especially like to thank Dimitri Zorin for sending us his complete adventure, Mark Craydon for his conversion for the book Defenders of the Faith and David Gibson for his article on Creepings.

On a final note, some fans of the Undead Sea Scrolls might already know that one of the editors for this netzine has joined the gang at the Midway Haven Alchemical Observatory to edit the next edition of the Undead Sea Scrolls. Rest assured that this situation will not affect the production of Quoth the Raven.

So enjoy the issue and remember, in the carnival nothing is as it seems..

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The Price of Admission

By Joseph Zeffelmaier aka Bela
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Randall duPree shook the morning fog from his head. It took a moment, but soon he remembered where he was. He was in a barn, and better yet, an abandoned barn. Yes, that's right. He found it last afternoon. After a thorough search, he found that both the barn and the farmhouse not far away seemed to be unoccupied, and they probably had been so for a while. Just the way Randall liked it. He had a sideshow to set up, and that was always easier to do when you didn't have to haggle over the price for rental. It had been a good month for duPree, as his moneybag indicated. October was always his time to shine, and he had indeed. The late autumn skies, the dying trees, the slight chill in the winds...all these things got the common folk in the mood for a little horror. Of course, he dealt in only the safest, most voyeuristic horrors. Usually.

Randall been quite surprised when he found himself on the isle of Liffe, but when one wanders the mists, one must be prepared for anything. So far, the lovely land seemed ripe for the pickings. He'd never been here before, which meant no one here had already seen his particular act. And the farm folk outside of the cities seemed to revel in the traditional late October celebrations. Yes, he had a good feeling, a very good feeling. And though he'd set up camp outside of Claveria, he knew there had to be more cities on this pleasant, pastoral isle. He could get in a good five or six performances, and perhaps charge a bit more than usual, to take advantage of the holiday season. He patted his stout horse, Lom, along his neck as he began to unpack his vardo. He threw the doors open and gazed inside. His broad face lit up with glee. It never failed to set his spirits soaring when he viewed his personal collection of oddities.

He pulled out one of his favourites, the dreaded Hand of Vecna! The gaunt, severed hand scuttled about its glass prison like a hideous spider. Randall of course new it to be a fake, for it was simply a magically animated hand and not the legendary artifact of great evil. Still, it never failed to get a gasp from the audience. The Book of the Dead, supposedly a Har'Akiri tome full of ancient secrets and diabolical spells-of course, another sham. He may have chuckled a bit at his frauds, but he had a keen eye and great love for the genuine articles. He set up his racks of lycanthrope blood, and he could vouch for their authenticity. Werewolves, wereboar, wereshark, even a vial of very rare werelion blood from Pharazia. But rarest of all was the blood of the werigorilla, the very blood that pumped in his veins. He'd been cursed by the Vistani years ago, and ever since had been searching for some cure, any cure. His search continued.

He waved away his reverie, and continued setting up his display. The Soul Blade, the Spellbook of Ar-Shickanus, the Brain of Rudolph Van Richten, the Crystal Ball of Gabreille Aderre, the Demon-Child of Vechor. All of them fake, including his most recent acquisition-The Most Vile Senmet, mummified Priest of Set! Of course, it was simply a desiccated corpse that he'd wrapped in old bandages and a few pieces of priestly regalia. Plus, after the unfortunate loss of his Skeleton of Duke Gundar, he had a coffin

waiting for something to fill it. His crowning touch was the chains holding it in place. It may not be animate at all, but those chains told their own story. He even had a footpad set to shake the coffin when he stepped on it. For after all, he was Randall duPree, Professor Arcanus, the world's greatest showman!

He checked over his showcase. Yes, everything was in place, including his smoke-pots and flares used to really give the performance punch. At last, he set his great banner among the barn rafters-Professor Arcanus & His Traveling Menagerie of the Macabre! His hair was greased, his monocle was set, his ruby-headed cane was in hand, and his smile veritably dripped charisma. The short, stout man threw his black-and-crimson cape over his shoulders, and swung wide the barn doors!

No one was there.

"Blast it all," he muttered to himself. He'd set up banners and signs over every inch of the local roads, and even in town itself. He'd spoken to people on the streets, who greeted his promised show with clear thrill. Where were they now? Even more than their money, he wanted their wide eyes and applause. It was the show that mattered most, but without an audience, there was no show! He felt his anger rising, and he knew quite well where that would lead. He put his fingers on his temples and willed himself to calm down. After all, perhaps they didn't read the show times on the posters. Perhaps late morning was too early for the farm-folk. Yes, it could be many things. He would simply have to wait.

It wasn't until hours later that he saw his first possible customer. He jumped up like an excited child, checked his presentation, and then turned to the young man coming up the old trail. "Greetings, young sir!" Arcanus bellowed. "And welcome to Professor Arcanus' Traveling Menagerie of the Macabre! Behold horrors the likes of which you've never seen, evil that will chill you to the very bone! If you are faint of heart..."

The young man waved at him, clearly indicating for him to stop. Arcanus sputtered for a moment, and then waited for the young man to speak. "Quite a set-up you've got here, mister. Really somethin'."

"Thank you, my good man. I am Professor Arcanus, keeper of lost secrets, seeker of forbidden lore, and..."

The young man shook Arcanus' massive hand. "The name's Coler. Gideon Coler. I own the farm over yonder. Heard you'd set up in the old Wilken's place. Thought I should warn you."

Arcanus furrowed his brow. "Warn me? Sir, I assure you my business is completely legitimate. I swear I..."

"Nah, nothing like that. It's not you, it's this place. I really think you'll wanna be moving outta here before nightfall. I don't know how you managed last night, but I wouldn't expect your luck to hold out twice."

"You make it sound as though I'm in some sort of danger."

"Well, straight to the point, there's a lot of bad going-ons that've happened here. No one knows why or how. Lots of folks think Old Man Wilkens summoned a demon up there years ago. 'Course I'm sure that's just hogwash."

"A demon, you say?"

"All I know is...They say Wilkins was into some mighty powerful Black Magic."

Said he used it to make his fields grow strong, and dry out his competition. One day, and this was maybe twenty years back, a little girl goes missing. Well, they find her in his basement with her insides on her outside. Guess there were these weird footprints, like a goats, but with a long tail behind ‘em. Well, they hung the old warlock up by the neck on that tree yonder, but no one ever did find his demon.”

Arcanus rubbed his goatee, taking in the story. He’d encountered many like it, in every farming community he’d ever been to. The locals always had some eerie tale of murder or spirits or devils. And by the gods, if they didn’t all know how to spin a yarn for all it’s worth. He had survived the night with no incident, and for a seasoned traveler like Arcanus, he figured that was proof enough. He puffed up his broad chest, and spoke.

“Thank you, Mr. Coler. You truly are a kind soul, risking your own person to come to this accursed place. Perhaps I may regale you and any friends and family you might want to bring, with a tale or two of the terrors that lie within these barn doors.”

Gideon chuckled a bit. “Ain’t ya heard? No one’s coming to see your little shindig.”

“Because of the Wilken’s murders? I assure you, my own magic has thoroughly warded this area.” A blatant lie, as Arcanus was no spellcaster, but it had worked before.

“First off, no one would’ve come here, not to this place, magic or no. Second off—” Gideon pointed to a small piece of paper lodged against some boards in the barn door.

Arcanus leaned in, to get a better look. He hadn’t noticed it before. He unfolded it, and his eyes nearly popped out of their sockets. He knew the swirling images, the lurid colors. Oh yes, he knew them all too well. “The Carnival!” he growled. Of all the foul luck! He gets dropped off in a new land, rife with possibilities, and the damned Carnival was here too! He’d once visited the community of Goldendale, in Mordent, only a day after the Carnival had left. His reception was cold. His wares simply couldn’t compare to the huge and wondrous act put on by the large, traveling show. Entire communities were soured to his own act, simply because they’d been bled dry, financially and socially, by the Carnival.

He slammed a fist into the boards, cutting open his knuckles, and then felt it begin—the change. His muscles tightened and began to swell, and he saw thick black hair begin to sprout over his hands. Quickly, he began his breathing exercises, focusing on his inner calm. In moments, the beast he was began to recede from the spotlight. He was, after all, Professor Arcanus and he’d be damned if he was going to lose out to some over-glamorized cart-and-pony act.

Gideon had leaned in to him “You okay, mister?” Arcanus twirled around and let his cape fly out for full effect. “Forgive my outburst. I was simply caught off guard. Thank you for your warning of both this place, and the nearby competition. If I might ask you one more thing...”

Gideon nodded, and Arcanus brought his ruby-headed cane into full view of the farmer. “Have you ever seen such a lovely gem in all your life?”

* * * * *

Arcanus regretted having to hypnotize poor Gideon, but he had no choice. The

Professor needed to visit the Carnival, and he couldn't leave his treasures unguarded. He'd make sure to give the man a few coins in appreciation. He had much on his mind, not the least of which was his desire for restitution. He knew he was but one of many small, touring acts, none of which could compete with the garish Carnival. Not in size, not in sheer number of freaks, and loathe as he was to admit it, not in quality. If half of what he'd heard about the Carnival was true, then it truly was a miracle enshrouded in tents and barkers. This show-stealing had to stop, or he and all the others like him would soon find themselves bereft of audiences and income.

It was late afternoon when he saw the huge banners, tents and vardos that could only be his competition. He heard the cheers, screams and laughter long before he saw it. Soon, he picked up the scent of wood smoke and sawdust and sugared candies. It was sheer entertainment and enterprise at work. Arcanus was reminded of that Vistani show so long ago. When he was innocent and human and... "No time for that now," he said to himself. He pressed back his night-black hair, straightened his jacket and strode into the entrance, or rather, the long line heading towards the entrance.

Finally, his wait was over. He stood just footsteps away from his great rivals, and yet couldn't deny the amazement in his eyes. There in the distance stood a giant of a man. He must have been ten feet tall, and gaunt as a scarecrow. And two face-painted Vistani stood nearby, throwing knives between them with inhuman skill. And music played. Sweet, lovely violins, punctuated by rhythmic drums and horns. It was so...so...

"Five coppers, sir."

Arcanus snapped to his senses. "Excuse me?"

A young man barely ready for his stubble stood by a small podium, hand outstretched. "Five coppers. For entrance."

Arcanus rolled his eyes and dug into his money purse. He dropped the coins into the boy's hand, and then strode into the Carnival proper.

As loathe as he might be to admit it, it was breath-taking. The jugglers, the hawkers, the fire-dancers, all of it. It was like every circus from his childhood memories, only magnified a hundred fold. Huge wagons formed the circle that made up the spectacular spectacle. And in its center was a massive tented area, surrounded by banners labeling it "The Hall of Horrors." Here, the largest of the many lines fed into the tent, with citizens anxious to witness what he could only imagine was some sort of supernatural fright-fest.

A brush from the side stopped his gaping. His hand instantly went to his moneybag, which was safely secured. He looked down and found himself staring at a young boy, no more than ten years old. He was clearly of Vistani blood, and adorned only in checkered pantaloons. His painted face stared up at Arcanus.

"Can I help you?" he asked?

The boy said nothing.

"My name is Professor Arcanus. And you would be?"

The boy said nothing.

Arcanus grunted. "Ah. So that's how it's going to be. Fine." He held out a tiny copper to the boy.

"I'm looking for whoever's in charge here. "

The boy said nothing.

“If you take me to said person...” With that, Arcanus reached behind the lad’s ear, and plucked out two silver coins. He held them out in his huge hand. “...these magic coins are yours.”

The boy stared at him, head cocked to the side. Then in one sudden movement, he plucked the coins from Arcanus’ hand.

“Ah! Most excellent!” Arcanus stopped, momentarily distracted by a rather shapely elvin snake-dancer. “Now where would I...” When he glanced back, the boy was gone, vanished into thin air. Vanished with Arcanus’ money. “Damnation!” he sputtered. He’d be angrier if he hadn’t himself employed some similarly shady dealings from time to time. It appeared that he would have to continue his search on his own.

His first stop was to a food vendor. He had worked up a powerful appetite, as he always did, and this time could afford to buy food himself. He was led by the scent of roasting meat to a vendor’s wagon operated by a large woman. As she turned to give change to her current patron, Arcanus was almost taken aback by her long, thick brown beard. Still, it was a circus, and not entirely unexpected. She handed the Liffian a large turkey leg, and he departed. Arcanus was next in line, and ordered the same. It simply looked too good to pass up.

He walked about, happily munching on the turkey leg, which tasted even better than it looked. For a moment, he stopped to watch a most fascinating act. A dark-skinned man from Valachan was in the process of actually letting a local girl pound a wooden spike into his hand. He didn’t grimace or wince, though the girl looked about ready to faint. When she finished, the crowd burst into applause. Ah, if there was a sweeter sound, he didn’t know it. He shook his head. ‘Stop it, Randall!’ he thought to himself. ‘These people are the competition. Don’t get taken in by their grandstanding.’

As Arcanus moved on, it became clear he had no idea where to start his search. Well, the line was almost gone at the Hall of Horrors. Perhaps he’d have a moment to investigate there. Sure enough, as he approached, a paunchy fellow in academic robes wandered out of the tent, followed by a face-painted midget in the exact same outfit. Arcanus strode towards him, and the paunchy man held up his hand.

“Forgive me, sir, but the next viewing doesn’t start for another half-hour.”

Arcanus paused. “Actually, though I’m certainly fascinated by your wares, I’m here for a different reason. I was hoping you might point me in the direction of whoever’s in charge of the Carnival.”

“Oh, I see.” said the other man, with clear disgust in his voice. “Well, I’ll tell you this much. You’ll be lucky to find her. She’s never around when one might actually need her.” The man looks Arcanus up and down. “Who might you be?”

Arcanus offered his hand. “Professor Arcanus, at your service.”

The other man shook his hand. “Professor Pacali at yours. From what University do you hail from, Professor...Arcanus, was it?”

“The University of Tvashti, in the distant island of Sri Raji. There, I obtained degrees in both psychology and philosophy.” A bold lie and one he’d used often enough. He’d found that citing a University from so far-off an isle often satisfied credential checkers.

Pacali puffed up a bit. “Ah. It isn’t often this rolling freak show sees so educated a customer. As to our ‘illustrious’ leader, well I cannot be much help there. She comes and goes at her own leisure, often returning with another unfortunate in tow.”

“Unfortunate?”

“A freak. A degenerate. A Vistani cur.” The little man at Pacali’s side tugged at his robes, but said nothing. “I’m sorry, Runt. I didn’t mean you. This Carnival is getting larger and larger as our ringleader brings more into her fold.”

“You make it sound as if she enslaves you all to her.”

Pacali snorted, and then absently patted his stomach. “No, nothing as overt as slavery. What happens here is much more...Please forgive me. I’m rambling.”

Arcanus leaned in. Perhaps there was something sinister going on here....something he could use. “No, no. Do go on.”

Pacali put his hand on the large man’s shoulder, taking him into his confidence. “What I say next, I tell you only because you are clearly an educated man. And I would hate for you to suffer my fate. The Skurra are setting up for the next show. Please, follow me.”

With that, Pacali pushed open the tent curtain, and ushered Arcanus inside. “Now what I’m about to show you may be most shocking. I ask that you use your academic’s mind and think before you react.” Then, Pacali led Arcanus around a corner, and Arcanus nearly fell backwards by what he saw. Sitting on a large slab was a man, or rather a thing that must have once been a man. Its tiny head sat upon a massive, ponderous body composed entirely of blubber. Huge rolls of fat made mockeries of its spindly limbs. By the gods, it must weigh hundreds and hundreds of pounds. And its face...so full of pain and sorrow.

“By all things holy, what is this?”

Pacali gently patted Arcanus on the back. “This is my friend Rusalid. Once, a beautiful and charming man, he is now cursed to spend his life trapped in this grotesque body. Cursed by Isolde, the mistress of the Carnival.”

Arcanus stood aghast. “He wasn’t born like this? This was...this was...”

“Forced upon him for crimes no one knows. This is how Isolde deals with those who displease her. She wraps her demonic energies around them, and...”

But Arcanus had stopped listening. His mind was lost in grim thoughts. What if he angered the mistress of the Carnival? What horrible torture would she inflict on him? Yet at the same time, he felt he should do something. What if Pacali was right? What if these Carnival freaks were indeed prisoners to some monster’s will and whim? He couldn’t just let this inhumane condition pass. His own lycanthropy was a curse. One that he’d brought on himself long ago. He deserved his inner beast for crimes of his own doing, but he had a hard time imagining that all the freaks in the Carnival deserved their fate.

He felt a slight slap on his face. “Arcanus? Are you with me, man?”

Professor Arcanus could only stammer. “I...I...I need some air!”

* * * * *

With that, he pushed his way out of the Hall of Horrors. He collapsed to his knees in the dirt outside, struggling for breath. He looked up and reeled at the sight. Everywhere he looked, he saw freaks. A woman as thin as a skeleton. A man with skin like an alligator. A huge strongman with green, warty flesh and a face hidden by a hood. He pulled himself up. Were they freaks or slaves to the will of a madwoman? He didn't know. He staggered to a hitch post, using it to steady his weak knees. That's when he saw them.

Three beautiful Vistani women, their costumes garish and somewhat revealing, their faces painted with different designs. One wore a leering grin, another had flames dancing along her cheekbones, and the third was like a harlequin with huge circles over her eyes. He stared at them for a moment, and they all stared back quizzically. Suddenly, they burst into motion. At first Arcanus thought they were about to dance, but it was no dance, for their movements cut him to his very soul. One of them stood primping herself in front of a mirror that wasn't there. Another got to her knees, pantomiming pulling at the other's skirt, and begging for her affections. The third looked on in mock horror. The primping one pushed her "suitor" to the ground, roaring with silent laughter. The "suitor" immediately stood with a scowl on her face and her fists clenched. She grabbing an invisible bottle from the on looking clown, and drained it in a flash. Suddenly, she spun to her "paramour," and began a series of carefully choreographed combat. With each smack, kick, punch and bite, the third looked on, her horror growing and growing. All of a sudden, the "suitor" was seized by the other too, who were full of acted disgust. The held her to the ground, shaking their fists with anger. Then, they pulled two knives and lowered them towards the bound one's chest.

"NO!" screamed Arcanus. It was too much. He'd just watched his worst sin re-enacted in pantomime. That day, so long ago, when he'd forced himself on the beautiful gypsy, Nadja. When her people cursed him, turned him into... Then he noticed that his outburst had drawn a crowd of gawking people. The normally composed man stepped back and ran. This was no Carnival. It was a madhouse! And all he wanted to do was escape it. He found himself behind a small tent, uncertain as to where the exit was. It was all too much. The cursed freaks, the soul-stabbing pantomime...why on earth had he even come here? His professional ego, his pride, had taken him to far this time. A part of him considered giving up the life altogether, retiring with his books.

Before he could put a coherent thought together, he heard what he thought was someone spitting. He turned the corner of the tent, to another side away from the thoroughfare. What he found was a beautiful woman with pale skin and long black hair, wrapped in a strange cloak. Dusk had fallen, so it was hard to get a clear picture, especially with the drying tears in his eyes. But he felt certain that the poor woman was spitting blood. He ran over to her.

"My poor woman! Are you alright?" He put a hand on her cloak, and immediately pulled it back. it wasn't a cloak at all! It was warm and felt like flesh! She turned, and the cloak spread out to become massive bat wings. He yelped, and dropped to his knees. "Oh! Mistress Isolde! I beg you, I meant no harm! I only..." The woman began laughing, a sweet, melodious sound. She bent to Arcanus.

"I'm not Isolde, sir. My name is Amelia. No need to be scared. I won't hurt you."

She offered him a hand, helping him up.

“You...you’re not a demon?”

She chuckled again. “Not at all, just your run-of-the-mill performer. “

“But...but...” Arcanus pointed at her wings.

“What? These old things?” She stretched them out, and they were magnificent.

Huge and strong, like a massive bat. “They started out as little nub things, a reminder of a crime that was relatively innocent.”

“I was told that someone was mutating you all, turning you into monsters and forcing you to work the Carnival.”

“That was a long time ago. The Puppetmaster is dead now.”

He furrowed his brow in confusion. Who on earth was the Puppetmaster? “No, I meant Isolde.”

This time, Amelia let out a loud guffaw. “Oh! You’ve been talking to Pacali. That little worm’s as twisted as his Pickled Punks. Isolde doesn’t enslave people. She saves them. She takes us in and gives us, who aren’t wanted anywhere else, a home. Don’t believe a word that old charlatan says. Some of us may be worse off than others, but if so, it’s because they brought it on themselves.”

Finally, Arcanus sat on the ground. The day’s events had simply been too much for him. “I have no idea what you’re saying.”

“It’s like this. Some of the troupers here started out like normal folk. Sometimes even normal folk need a place to hide and get away from their pasts. But if you spend too long here, things happen. We call it The Twisting. Your body starts to reflect your heart. Take Black Jake over there.” She points to a shaggy dwarf, pulling up heavy weights with his mighty beard. “He came here bald as an egg, wanting nothing more than a beard that other dwarves would marvel at. Well, he came here and it finally grew. But instead of the bright red beard his family always had, it was black, just like his past. Thing is, his heart is as big as an elephant’s. So the Twisting kind of gave him what he wanted, but also gave him a reminder as well. It’s an ironic thing, no doubting that.”

“I met a man...morbidly obese...how did?”

“Ah. The Gargantuan. Well, at his core, he’s just a lazy, lazy man. Made everyone do everything for him, never did an honest day’s work in his life. That’s why he is the way he is now. We offer sanctuary here, mister. But it’s got a price. And those of us with good hearts...well, the price usually isn’t too high then.”

Arcanus took a deep breath, trying to collect his thoughts. Amelia put her hand on his shoulder. “Are you alright, mister?”

“I don’t know, honestly. I came here to give your mistress a piece of my mind. I too am a traveling performer...but now I am utterly bewildered. One man tells me this is a prison of enslaved freaks. You tell me it’s a haven for the unwanted and unloved. My own anger desperately wants to cling to Pacali’s explanation, but my heart...”

Amelia sat with him, her long wings folding behind them both. “Can I ask you something?”

“Certainly, my dear.”

“When you first saw me, you asked if I was alright. Why?”

He smiled a bit, perhaps the first time since he stepped into the Carnival. “I

thought you were spitting up blood, that someone had hit you. I wanted to see if there was anything I could do.”

She demurely kissed his cheek. He blushed to the color of rose. “Then you have nothing to fear among us. Your heart is good. Your instincts are to do the right thing. So in the end, you will.”

He tugged at his goatee, puzzled by the comment. But before he could say anything, she spoke.

“It was fake blood. I was washing it out of my mouth. It’s part of my act, you see.” With that, she stood again, unfolding her black, leathery wings. “Fear me mortal, for I am The Vampiress!” she bellowed in a put-on accent. Arcanus wasn’t scared, but he did give her the oddest look. She giggled at his scrutiny. “Scares the pants off the reelers.”

Amelia helped Arcanus to his feet. She dusted him off, and then looked over his shoulder. She gave him an unusual smile. “Looks like you have company.”

Arcanus turned, and let out an audible gasp. The woman standing behind him was, quite simply, the most beautiful woman he’d ever seen. She was tall and proud, with hair the color of midnight. Her skin seemed both pale and strong, without a single crease of age or worry. She wore a tight leather jerkin and high riding boots. A deep red cloak flapped around her shoulders, but did not obscure the ornate hilt of the sword hanging from her hip. She gazed into Arcanus’ eyes, perhaps his very soul. The emotion behind her eyes was unreadable. “I believe you were looking for me.”

He stood there, unsure how to respond. He decided to trust his heart. “Somehow, I know that you must be Isolde. And yes, I was looking for you, but for the wrong reasons. I would have approached you with anger in my words, and that anger is gone. I thought this place to be a threat to me. In truth, it is a source of great...reflection, I suppose is the word. Whatever demons are here, I brought in with me. I humbly apologize for any distraction I may have caused and will be on my way.” Arcanus adjusted his cape, and began to go.

Isolde put her hand on his arm. There was a warmth to the gesture unlike any he’d ever felt. “You are Professor Arcanus, yes? I have heard of you and your Menagerie of the Macabre. It sounds most impressive.” Her radiant face held a hint of a smile, and it was all Arcanus could do to not faint from her beauty.

Beaming with pride, Arcanus sucked in his paunch a bit. “Why thank you, Madame. Coming from the leader of this marvelous Carnival, I cannot imagine higher praise.”

Instead of ushering him out, as Arcanus expected, she put her arm in his and began walking him to a long line. At the end of the line was a large Vardo, bedecked in all sorts of arcane wares. Atop the door, a sign was painted to read-Madame Fortuna-Fortunes Foretold, Mysteries Revealed. Isolde strolled right up to the front of the line, and motioned for Arcanus to step in. A few customers began to get huffy, but one look at the commanding Isolde silenced them.

“Oh, no. I wouldn’t want to inconvenience these people.” he stammered.

She continued to motion him on. “It will take but a moment. Consider it a professional courtesy to one of the pioneers of the Touring Entertainment field.”

No sooner had Arcanus stepped in line, then a bubbly young couple exited the vardo. They were holding hands and cooing sweet nothings to each other. Well, whoever this Madame Fortuna was, she'd apparently made this couple's day. Arcanus stepped into the Vardo, and it took his eyes a moment to adjust to the darkness. A round table, carved with arcane runes and holding a crystal ball, separated him from an old Vistani woman. He was enshrouded by a large cloak, and her nimble hands ended in long, painted fingernails. The woman motioned to a seat.

"Please. Sit." she murmured in a thick accent.

Arcanus found himself sitting before he thought to do it. The old woman raised her head to him, and only then did he realize that she had no eyes, just two black holes beneath her eyelids. Though unusual, he didn't find himself put-off by her appearance. It seemed the woman could sense this and smiled.

"I am Madame Fortuna. You are Randall duPree, and have been sent to me by our lady Isolde."

At the sound of his birth-name, duPree blanched. He realized he hadn't set foot in a Vistani wagon since that horrible night so long ago, and hadn't seen a Vistani Oma in just as long. Not since the one who had put the curse on him. That woman had been a middle-aged seer and had wielded potent magic. Indeed, she had forced lycanthropy on the deserving Randall duPree, which was not an easy feat. Madame Fortuna went on.

"You need not fear me, duPree. I am not your enemy. I speak for the Skurra, the painted Vistani you have seen about the Carnival. "

The memory of the masked trio who divined his hidden shame flashed through his mind. Before he could say anything, Madame Fortune went on.

"Ah, the Fates Three. They mean no harm, but they have a way of getting under one's skin. Do not let their silence disturb you. The masks they wear, the Skurra-Vera, protect them from the twisting, but deny them the use of their voices. I alone of the Skurra have given in to the Twisting, allowing it to take my eyes so that the Skurra may be heard. "

The old woman patted his hand gently. He couldn't tell if she was searching for his palm, or trying to comfort him. "You need not be so afraid, duPree."

Randall DuPree, Professor Arcanus, cursed werebeast, sighed heavily. "I have good cause. My crimes against your people are..."

"Are not of importance here. I am not your judge. I am merely a voice. A voice for my people and a voice for the all-seeing spirits. I am here to give you a glimpse of your future."

With haunting grace, her hands glided across her crystal ball. It filled with mist, and her unseeing eyes locked onto its glassy surface. Arcanus had seen his share of precognitive charlatans, but he had absolutely no doubt about Madame Fortuna. He had a discerning eye for the real thing.

"You are a wanderer, Randall duPree. Your heart longed to see many lands, many sights, and many people. You have traveled these lands for many years. But it was more than wanderlust. No, you were running. Running from your shame, your self-loathing. When you are hurt, hurt like you hurt that girl long ago, the beast bound to you takes

over. Yet, you do not feel you have suffered enough. And why? Because under your showman's facade, you are a good man. You mean no man or woman harm. You lost your mind that night and have never forgiven yourself. The way the Vistani never forgave you. But in your heart, you do not wish to wander. You wish to be among others, those like you. Those who adore the bizarre, the mystical, and the mysterious. Those who can accept you for who you are. That is the truth of your wandering. You have seen your sights, met your strangers, and secretly wish for it to end, so that you may be among your fellow man again. Yet you still move on, severing all ties. Not because you want to, but because you do not feel you have earned peace yet. Now tell me, Randall duPree, am I right?"

Arcanus sat mouth agape. Tears streamed down his face, and he found it very difficult to breathe. It took all his effort to croak out a single word, "Yes."

"What I speak of is the past, and the present. But I have seen your future, as well. Would you care to hear it?"

Still choking on his tears, Arcanus only nodded. A foolish gesture, he realized, as the woman couldn't see him. Yet she went on as if she could. "That which you seek, you shall find. You will not be alone forever, duPree. Indeed, you will soon be surrounded by those who will accept you, embrace you, and make you one of their own. I have seen many things, and while others remain hidden from me, I do know this. Some day soon, the Hall of Horrors will need a new Professor. When that happens, those who cursed you will seek you out. You will be allowed to repay your debt in the company of those who will be your new family."

Wiping away his tears, Arcanus sits stunned. Dare he dream? Could it be that someday, he would return? That he would be free of his constant loneliness?

"We are done here, you and I. For now. Return to your Menagerie and go your way. Until we meet again." Madame Fortune whispered.

He rose, and slowly walked to the door. His head was swimming from the day's events. Just as he reached the velvet curtains that served as the door, he heard the old woman's voice again.

"I loved Nadja. She was a jewel to our people. We did what we had to do, but sometimes...not often, but sometimes...a curse can lead a man to his true destiny."

Arcanus walked back into the throng. Night had begun to fall, but the festivities seemed to linger. He walked on, and just before he exited, he turned and looked once more at the Carnival. It's sweeping tents. Its beautiful wagons. Its wonderful aromas. And its many kind people wearing the faces of freaks. And somewhere deep inside him, something stirred. A feeling he hadn't felt in a long time. Homecoming. All for a mere five coppers.

* * * * *

His walk back to the barn was lighter in step, and he even whistled along the way. Yes, he would pack his things, put on what shows he could and be happy for them. He wasn't ready to join the Carnival. Not yet. But he knew that there was room for him, and them, in these dark lands.

When he arrived at the barn, he called out for Gideon. There was no answer. He swung wide the door, and breathed a sigh of relief. But Gideon was nowhere to be seen. Odd, as the man shouldn't have been able to slip free of the hypnosis yet. Arcanus instantly began rummaging through his belongings. The Hand of Vecna was still there. The Brain, the werebeast Blood, his false Senmet...wait. Something was missing. The jewelled, ornate, magical dagger he'd named the Soul Blade was not in its display. Instead, a tiny note was waiting for him. Something felt terribly wrong about this, but his curiosity overtook him, and he read;

*'Dear Randall,
Sorry to run off on you, old chap. But I have need of your little dagger, and figured you wouldn't easily part with it. Hope you had fun at the Carnival. Be warned, there's more to it than you know. Much, much more.*

And so, I bid you a fond farewell, and anxiously await our next meeting. And trust me, the fun has just begun.

*Yours, in love of all things Macabre
G.C.'*

The Freak Show

New Performers in the Carnival

By Joseph Zeffelmaier aka Bela

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Black Jake

Male Dwarf Ftr4: CR4; SZ S (4'11"); HD 4d10; HP39; Init +6 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30ft; AC 12; AL NG, Fort-+8, Ref-+4, Will +6 STR 16, DEX 14, CON 16, INT 10, WIS 12, CHA 8 Feats-Back against the wall, Weapons Focus (short sword), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Bull Rush Skills-Craft (leatherworking) +7, Gather Information +5, Intimidate +5, Sense Motive +6.

Background: Black Jake was born Jacobi Firebeard in Dunkelheit, a small dwarven settlement in the mountains of Lamordia. He was the second son of a long line of tanners. The Firebeard's were well known for their long, fiery red hair and beards. Perhaps it was the fumes from Dunkelheit's mines, perhaps a curse on the often vain family, but Jacobi was born utterly devoid of hair. Never would he sport the proud beard of his family, and the other dwarves, though they felt pity for him, couldn't help but regard Jacobi as some sort of pariah. Indeed, many feared that extended contact with the poor boy might result in hair loss for any around them. Jacobi proved very skilled in the family business, but he rarely left the depths of his family home for fear of the scared & pitying looks of his fellow dwarves. Doctors and alchemists

examined the boy thoroughly, but could not find the cause of his baldness.

When Jacobi was thirty-five, he could no longer stand his life in Dunkelheit. While its citizens were never cruel to him, he knew they would never see him as an equal. Jacobi scaled the Sleeping Beast Mountains and trekked into Darkon, where Dunkelheit's populace originated. He settled in Il Aluk and hoped to make a life for himself as a tanner. More often than not, he found himself finding employment as a sell sword, and was forced to do rather shady dealings in order to stay afloat. He served as a loan shark, and occasional bounty hunter. He found these jobs distasteful, but his leather shop was failing. All that Jacobi had found in Il Aluk was an extension to the despair he felt in Dunkelheit. Little did he realize that his life would soon change.

The Carnival had been invited to perform for Lord Azalin himself. Jacobi was hired in as an extra guard for the occasion. The dwarf was amazed by what he saw; Giants and jugglers and fire-dancers all part of the same community. They were freaks yet they were freaks that had made a place for themselves and accepted each other as family. Jacobi instantly felt a kinship for these performers, and ducked out with them when the performance was over.

Jacobi was with the Carnival when the soldiers of Falkovnia rose up to attack the strangers. When Isolde appeared and led them to freedom, Jacobi followed. The Carnival folk were very accepting of the hairless dwarf, and grateful to have a skilled leather-worker in their midst. For the first time, the pain in his life began to fade. But never more so than the day that Jacobi awoke with a strange itching on his scalp and face. He ran to his mirror, and saw a face full of stubble. He nearly wept as he rubbed his hands across his face. Within a matter of days, he'd grown a full head of dark black hair. In a week, he had a mane and a thick, full beard. He noticed that other Carnies had started experiencing changes, and it didn't take him long to deduce that it was their new mistress who was responsible. He would've liked to have the red hair of his family, but he figured that the ebon mane was a reflection of the dark deeds he'd done in his life.

Current Sketch: Since his initial twisting, Jacobi (or Black Jake as the troupers dubbed him) has discovered something amazing about his beard. The magic of the carnival made the mass of hair prehensile. As part of his act, he will squat down and wrap his beard around heavy weights or other objects, and then straighten up, pulling the cumbersome load up in his beard. The hair never pulls out, and is as tough as steel wire. He hasn't cut his hair since they day of it's appearance, but it seems to have stopped on it's own. His mane falls a good four inches past his shoulders, and his beard nearly reaches to his waist. While lacking fine motor skill, Jacobi can control his beard enough to pick up

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objects, and on occasion, even reach out and bind the hands of a thief. He is happier now than he has ever been in his life, and has no desire to ever leave his friends in the Carnival.

Combat: While an able fighter, Black Jake prefers to leave his days of violence in the past. However, he will arm himself with his shortsword and dwarven chain in defense of the Carnival

Beard: Black Jake can attempt to grapple an opponent with his beard on a successful touch attack. The opponent must make an opposed Strength Check against Jake, or be held tight in the beard. A successful Escape Artist check (DC 22) can also free a captive. Black Jake's biggest advantage in this type of situation is that his hands are still free, allowing him to attack an opponent who is held fast.

La Petite En Pointe

Female Human Exp1: CR1/2; SZ M (5'9"); HD 1d4; HP4; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 30ft; AC 14; AL NG: Fort+0, Ref+6, Will+0 STR 8, DEX 18, CON 10, INT, 15, WIS 13, CHA 17. Feats-Expertise, Lightning Reflexes. Skills-Balance +4, Hide +5, Jump +2, Perform +7, Tumble +4.

Appearance: La Petite en Pointe is a striking woman. Tall and lithe, she moves with grace and gentility. However, one cannot help but notice one particular feature about her. She is completely bald, and her head tapers into a rounded point. Known to many circus folk as a Pinhead, she was born with this condition. However, it doesn't seem to detract from her beauty.

Background: La Petite En Pointe was born Claudette duMartin, from the domain of Richemulot. Born to a moderately famous musician family, she was kept secret in the family. Due to her odd appearance, her parents considered her a hindrance to their rising fame. So they kept her in the house, day and night. Tutors were brought in, teaching her everything a young debutante should learn. Art, music, etiquette—all of these were drilled into her. But it was dance that truly took root.

Born with undeniable grace and rhythm, the quiet girl finally found a way to express herself. All her loneliness and confusion and fear came pouring out in ballet. Her mind raced with visions of handsome suitors as she spun about the family ballroom. It was the first time in her life she was happy. She was sixteen when her parents' fame reached a turning point. The duMartin family decided to throw a grand ball. And though it clearly devastated Claudette, they demanded that she remain in her room the whole time. They did not want Richemulot's social elite to realize their daughter was a freak. The young girl wept and wept as she heard the music, laughter and dancing going on below. She wanted nothing more than to go down and be swept away by a young Viscount. Finally, unable to resist, she crept out of her room. She then went into one of the rooms belonging to her mother, a great actress. Donning a long red wig from her mother's collection, the young woman glided down the stairs to the party. She gasped at the beauty. Candles burned, wine flowed, and people danced; it was more happiness than she'd ever seen. Almost

Quoth the Raven: Issue #3 immediately, a handsome young noble noticed her. He bowed, she curtsied and the dance began. From one gentleman to the next, the euphoric Claudette danced on air. Her parents, engrossed in their social climbing, did not even notice her.

It was everything she could do not to burst into tears. For the first time in her life, she felt accepted, no longer alone. It was late in the night, and some of the guests had made their way home. The quartet struck up their final song, and Claudette found herself in the arms of the noble who first danced with her. He cooed sweet words to her, inquiring as to her marital status, and lineage. She was so flush with the romance that she didn't notice his ringed hand reach up to stroke her hair. In one sudden move, her deception came crashing down. The noble gasped as the wig fell off, revealing her true appearance. Only then did her parents spot her. In a fury, they ushered the crying girl back to her room.

After long berating, her parents decided what to do with the disobedient girl. She was to be sent to one Dr. J. Everett Mingus, a doctor in the Darkonian Boglands. He was a specialist in abnormal physiology, who had accomplished moderate success in curing physical deformities, predominantly through surgery. Claudette will not speak of her time at Dr. Mingus' clinic. It was a dark time in her life, marked only by a few friends she made there. It was in Darkon that the Carnival found the girl, after she'd fled from the Boglands. Recognizing her as one of their own, the Troupers took her in.

Current Sketch: Claudette is perfectly at home in the Carnival. She is painfully

shy and gentle when not performing, blushing at the slightest sign of affection and giggling quietly. However, when on her stage, dancing for paying customers, she loses her shyness and becomes completely enrapt in her dance. Her grace and haunting voice can capture even the steeliest heart, for they can all see the woman's pure heart shining through. Hardened soldiers have wept at her dances, and even those initially startled by her appearance soon see past it, to the beautiful girl she is.

Combat: Claudette never enters combat. She is thin and frail, and frightens easily. However, anyone that sees her dance uninterrupted for a full round must make a Will Save (DC 17) or be affected by the Enthrall spell—a gift from the Twisting. However, the Twisting's magical gift comes with a price. Claudette must never attempt to hide her appearance, or she loses the power. Even donning a wig for a moment causes her scalp to itch and burn.

The Runt

Male Half-Vistani Rog1: CR1; SZ S (3'9"); HD 1d6; HP6; Init +8 (Dex, Improved Initiative); Spd 30ft; AC 14; AL N: Fort+0, Ref+6, Will+0STR 8, DEX 18, CON 11, INT, 11, WIS 7, CHA 12 Feats-Improved Initiative Skills-Balance +4, Climb+6, Hide +6, Jump +4, Tumble +6

Appearance: The Runt is an uncommon type of half-Vistani. He is a midget, just shy of four feet tall. However, he is quite quick and nimble, able to leap and bound with ease. He usually dresses in robes similar to that of Prof. Pacalli. His Skurra mask covers his entire face in

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white, with two large black circles over his eyes, and a third covering his mouth. It gives the Runt a constant appearance of shock and horror, which serves him well when touring Georges through the Hall of Horrors.

Background: The Runt spent most of his life in the service of the madman Dr. Emil Bollenbach. He was the son of a Darkling mother and an unknown father, though he has always suspected Bollenbach to be his sire. He was told that Bollenbach bought him from his mother, first to study his physical condition, then to serve him as a laboratory assistant. The Runt's years with the scientist were not pleasant ones, as he was often forced to carry heavy loads of equipment and clean up after some rather gruesome experiments. Bollenbach wasted no time informing the boy that the outside world would loathe and despise him for his appearance. Feeling he had nowhere to go, the Runt was loyal and hard working. He was punished for failure with beatings and forced starvation, locked into a cellar. The young half-Vistani believed this was all he deserved that whatever powers ruled the land had cursed him from birth.

It was two years ago that his life changed. Bollenbach had unleashed a strange, semi-liquid alchemical golem against a group of adventurers, only to be soundly defeated. In typical fashion, the scientist turned tail and ran, but this time left his cowering assistant behind. The Runt fled from the warriors, lost and alone in the woods of Kartakass. He felt certain that he would meet his end at the fangs of the Kartakan wolves, but just when his doom seemed near, two

strangers appeared and saved his life. They were Vistani, but not of any kind the little fellow had seen before. They were identical twins, with matching face paint. Their whirling daggers cut the wolves down, and the twins brought the Runt back to the Carnival. There, a Vistani Tribe, The Skurra, accepted him for the first time in his life. They taught him the secrets of the Skurra-Vera and welcomed him into their ranks.

Current Sketch: The Runt is an eager fellow, always aiming to please his new family that has given him so much. Shortly after he joined the Carnival, he was taken under the wing of Prof. Pacalli. It was the Darkonian who gave

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the half-Vistani his moniker. The Runt now serves as Pacalli's assistant in the Hall of Horrors, pulling curtains, gathering props and cleaning up messes. He does this work with a happy heart, however. Pacalli treats him much better than Bollenbach ever did, rewarding him with candy for a job well done, and never beating or starving him if he does badly. The Runt is blindly loyal to him, and the only people he cherishes more are his fellow Skurra.

Combat: The runt is a poor combatant, and he knows it. He will always run in the face of violence.

The Sideshow

New Carnival Freaks

By Henry Eshleman aka Cole Deschain

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Armitage Avalon

Mr. Frost

Male human, Ari2/Clr5: CR 7; Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 2d8+5d8+14; hp 48; Init +0; Spd 30ft; AC 13 (+0 Dex, +3 *amulet of natural protection*); Atk: +6 Melee (1d4+2; crit 19-20, x2, dagger) or +4 Ranged (1d4; crit, x2, darts); SA Spells, Turn Undead (5/day); SQ Cold subtype; AL NG; SV Fort +6, Ref +1, Will +13; Str 14, Dex 11, Con 15, Int 15, Wis 18, Cha 14. *Skills and Feats:* Bluff +7, Concentration +7, Diplomacy +9, Disguise +9, Heal +9, Innuendo +11, Knowledge (arcane) +7, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +7, Knowledge (religion) +7, Perform +7, Ride +5, Spellcraft +7; Brew Potion, Cold One, Iron Will, Jaded.

Languages: Mordentish*, Darkonese, Lamordian.

Cleric spells per day: 5/4+1/3+1/2+1. Base DC = 14 + spell level.

Deity: Hala *Domains:* Healing (cast healing spells at +1 caster level), Magic (Use scrolls wands, and other devices with spell completion or spell trigger activation as a wizard of one-half cleric level).

Mr. Frost is hard to miss in a crowd. At 6 feet tall, he's far from inconspicuous. His unnaturally white

hair, pale skin, and ice blue eyes make for quite an impressive figure. The fact that his entire body is sheathed in hoarfrost contributes to his chilling appearance. This frosty exterior belies a warm personality.

Background: The son of a fairly important family in Port-a-Lucine, Armitage grew up without the concept of want or suffering. As his carriage rolled through the poorer sections of town, he would simply draw the curtain across the windows and ignore the suffering beyond. Yet this privileged existence came to an end when, one day, a badly wounded man appeared on his doorstep. Not wishing to deal with such unpleasantness Armitage had his servants drive the man off. The unfortunate fellow died of his wounds not ten feet from the Avalon household. This act would not go unnoticed, for the dying man was an agent of the Living Brain of Rudolph von Aubrecker. Within weeks Avalon's servants had been killed or enslaved by the Brain, and the haughty aristocrat was driven from Dementlieu. Luckily for him, the Carnival was in town, and he was able to secure passage. By the time the Carnival had reached Nova Vaasa, Armitage no longer had any desire to venture out in public. The Twisting had begun to

manifest, exposing his icy disregard to the world.

Current Sketch: Since joining the Carnival, Armitage has learned the error of his ways, and has become a truly warm and caring individual. After an encounter with a coven of Witches in Valachan he became a cleric of Hala, and now serves the Carnival as a healer. His stage act is of decidedly secondary importance, and rarely bothers to perform. He has developed a strong friendship with Hermos, and the two men often hold theological conversations over the nature of their respective deities. Frost is a dedicated healer, and goes out of his way to assist any injured individual he sees, as a way of atoning for his past callousness.

Combat: Mr. Frost does what he can to avoid combat, seeing it as a waste of what could be productive energy. When pressed into battle, or when facing the Undead or Demons he has no qualms about using whatever spells or abilities he can bring to bear. The only weapon he normally carries is a dagger. Due to his low body temperature, unintelligent undead ignore him unless he attacks. As an additional side effect, he is utterly impervious to cold, but takes double damage from fire. Being a man of frost, he has little love for the heat.

Elfhryn Winter The Wraith

Male human, Wiz5/Ftr2: CR 7; Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 5d4+2d10+7; hp 33; Init +1; Spd 30ft; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 *ring of protection*); Atk: +7 Melee (1d8+2; crit 19-20, x2,

Quoth the Raven: Issue #3 long sword) or +5 Ranged (1d4; crit, x2, darts); SA Spells; SQ Familiar; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +8; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 11. *Skills and Feats:* Alchemy +14, Climb +4, Concentration +9, Craft (weapon smith) +8, Jump +4, Knowledge (arcane) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +7, Knowledge (Ravenloft) +7, Knowledge (religion) +12, Ride +5, Scry +10, Spellcraft +14, Swim +4; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Empower Spell, Expertise, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Silent Spell, Spell Focus (evocation), Weapon Focus (long sword).

Languages: Vaasi*, Balok, Darkonese, Draconic, Mordentish.

Wizard spells per day: 4/4/3/2. Base DC = 14 + spell level, 16 + spell level for Evocation spells.

Spell book: 0- Daze, Detect Magic, Flare, Light, Mage Hand, Mending, Ray of Frost, Read Magic; 1- Burning Hands, Comprehend Languages, Identify, Mage Armor, Magic Missile, Magic Weapon, Mount, Ray of Enfeeblement; 2- Darkness, Daylight, Flaming Sphere, Locate Object, Melf's Acid Arrow, Pyrotechnics, See Invisibility, Whispering Wind; 3- Clairaudience/Clairvoyance, Fireball, Flame Arrow, Gust of Wind, Keen Edge, Lightning Bolt.

Introduction: The Wraith is a rather striking individual. He is a tall, handsome Kartakan, clean-shaven with shoulder-length hair. His appearance is made even more striking by the fact that thanks to the Twisting, his skin, hair, and eyes are all the same shadowy gray. Unfortunately, his personality is best described as caustic. Due to his own high intelligence, he has little patience

with those who cannot keep up with him. However, those who earn his respect find him a friendly individual, if still somewhat tactless. Since joining the Carnival, he has warmed somewhat, but he remains distant and secretive with new acquaintances.

Background: The man who would become The Wraith was born Elthryn Winter, in the town of Skald, Kartakass. He was always a secretive type, and few suspected it when he took up the study of magic under a retired adventurer. Elthryn saw magic as a very effective route to power. Unfortunately for him he caught the attention of Harkon Lukas, and he was forced to beat a hasty retreat out of Kartakass. Luckily for Elthryn, the Carnival passed through the area and was able to protect him from Lukas. His secretive nature manifested itself in the darkening of his skin, eyes, and hair. Now entirely shadow-gray, The Wraith has lost the conspicuousness that almost ended his life.

Current Sketch: The Wraith has taken rather well to life with the Carnival and it's unlikely that he will ever choose to leave. He has developed a strong romantic interest in Amelia, the Vampiress. She remains unaware of his infatuation, largely because, for all of his experience, he is almost pathologically shy around her. He has also taken up the study of swordplay, because, as he is often heard to say, "A sword would look really good in my act!"

Combat: In spite of his recent martial training, The Wraith hardly considers himself a warrior. Generally he relies on his magic, unless all else fails. He will

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then employ a simple, nonmagical long sword.

Miranda

Female human, Rog3: CR 3; Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 3d6+3; hp 16; Init +4; Spd 30ft; AC 14 (+4 Dex); Atk: +2 Melee (1d4; crit 19-20, x2, dagger) or +6 Ranged (1d4; crit, x2, darts); SA Sneak attack +2d6; SD Evasion, Uncanny Dodge (Dex Bonus to AC); AL NG; SV Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 10. *Skills and Feats:* Balance +12, Climb +6, Diplomacy +11, Disguise +9, Gather Information +9, Jump +8, Listen +6, Perform +10, Search, +8, Sense Motive +6, Spot +6, Tumble +12; Dodge, Mobility, Muse. *Languages:* Sourangien*, Darkonese, Mordentish.

Miranda is actually quite normal looking, as Troupers go. She's a very pretty young woman, with curly blonde hair and an athletic figure... Her eyes are solid silver in color with no visible iris or pupil. They also give off a faint glow in dark conditions. Although she joined the Carnival quite by accident, she has since found her niche, and truly enjoys her life as a Trouper.

Background: Miranda has been an orphan since before she can remember and she doesn't even recall who named her. Indeed, her only recollection is that that "Miranda" is, in fact, her real name. She was born in the village of Tristepas in Sourange; her earliest memories were of fishing in the Maison d'Sablet and getting into trouble with the local authorities. She was always a curious child, and this led her into all sorts of

dangerous scrapes in her youth. After a particularly traumatic encounter with a pack of cannibal zombies, Miranda hid in one of the vardos of a visiting carnival, unaware that her sanctuary would forever change her life. The Skurra were well aware of their stowaway but they could tell she wasn't much of a threat. When Miranda finally came out of hiding, the Carnival was in Darkon. Fortunately the girl had no real desire to return to Sourange and she has never regretted her decision to stay with the Carnival.

Current Sketch: Miranda's innate curiosity has manifested in the change to her eyes. She can now see in the dark as well as any dwarf and relishes her ability. She regards the Carnival as her family with Isolde as an adoptive mother, the Wraith as her older brother, Amelia as a sister and Herмос like a caring uncle. Indeed, Miranda is one of

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the few Troupers who genuinely likes everyone. Even Pacali is rather fond of her, seeing her as a sweet but naïve child utterly unaware of the horror around her. Miranda is generally a cheerful person, although she takes her friends and adopted family very seriously. After growing up alone, she doesn't tolerate any harm to those she cares for.

Rather than try to enhance her Twisting, Miranda downplays it, instead acting as a barker or occasionally running a game or two. She is always curious to learn new things, and has been known to badger more exotic "Georges" with an endless stream of questions.

Combat: While she isn't terribly strong, Miranda is extremely quick. Her weapon of choice is the dart. She prefers to avoid fights and makes an effort to get someone powerful like the Brute to help her if a violent confrontation arises.

The Human Morningstar

A Freakish Avenger

By Andrew Snow aka MDSnowman

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Albert Helmer

The Human Morningstar

Male human, Rog3/Ftr1/Avn2:

CR 7; Medium-sized Humanoid; HD 3d6+3d10+6; hp 33; Init +3; Spd 30ft; AC 20 (+3 studded leather, +3 Dex, +4 Natural); Atk: +7 Melee (1d6+2 crit, x2, *Spiked Fists*) or +9 Ranged (1d6; crit, x2, *Spikes*); SA Sneak attack: +2d6, Resolve +2, Spike Storm; SD Evasion, Uncanny Dodge (Dex Bonus to AC), Intuition (DC 20), Body Spikes; AL N; SV Fort +7, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 08
Skills and Feats: Balance +9, Climb +8, Craft: Leather Working +2, Gather Information +5, Hide +10, Jump +9, Listen +7, Move Silently +10, Sense Motive +9, Spot +9, Tumble +9; Endurance, Jaded, Point Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Weapon Focus: Spikes
Languages: Falkovnian*, Mordentish
Equipment: Masterwork Studded Leather Armor (Custom Made)

Albert Helmer is a youth of average height and slender build. He wears his long brown hair long down his back. He almost constantly wears his black studded leather armor with several holes cut into the leather to make room for the numerous bone spikes that protrude from his body. He also wears a bandanna over his forehead to hide the brand that marks him as a Falkovnian. No matter what he does though his pale

blue eyes are always alight with fierce determination that hints at the ocean of rage that lurks just under the surface.

Background

Albert grew up on the streets of quite possibly the most awful city in the whole core, Lekar. His family murdered by the Talons when he was only six, he was left to wander the streets trying desperately to survive. It wasn't long before he was forced to turn to crime, but he was fortunate enough to fall in with a gang of children in the same situation.

It was amidst those pint-sized rogues that Albert grew up. He spent six years with the group and eventually became their de facto leader. All the younger children looked up Albert as the streets had hardened him into an adult at the scant age of twelve. He became especially close to a little girl named Ingrid, a fair-haired 10-year-old who had become the little sister that Albert had never had. Albert had forged his gang of children into a band of practiced burglars. They made daring raids into the homes of merchants and carried off whatever had not been nailed to the floor. Life became easier for the children, and in time they were able to buy their own food, and to Albert's joy he was able to buy, what he believed were, good cloths for Ingrid.

Their success, however, was short-lived. Eventually Albert and his gang bit

off more than they could chew when they broke into the home of a courier who was supposedly hired to deliver goods to the Talons by the Ministry of the Arcane. While Albert and his gang crept through the house stuffing anything that looked valuable into sacks he heard talking from a nearby room. What he saw were two men talking. One of the men wore a dark great coat and the other was a tall spindly man carrying what appeared to be a scythe. The conversation was unsettling as the two spoke of vague bargains, but eventually it turned horrifying as the tall man said off-handedly “You do know that you have an infestation, don’t you?” The gaunt man then looked right at where Albert hid and grinned sadistically at him. The remainder of the night was a haze of blood and screams, when the haze had lifted Albert was running at a breakneck pace through the street, holding the bloodied form of Ingrid to him. His screaming eventually brought the guards who gave chase and, for the first time in his, Albert left Lekar by twisting his way past a pair of guards at a seldom-used gateway.

He ran blindly into the wilderness to escape the carnage, but his body eventually gave out on him and he collapsed falling unconscious still clutching the now dead Ingrid to his chest. When he came to he was being tended by several people that the boy could only term as “freaks”. He soon found that the carnival had come across him during after they’d set up camp. Eventually all the horrors of the night settled in on him, Ingrid was dead, his friends were gone and he was alone amongst strangers. It didn’t take him long to see beyond the troupers’ physical appearances, but he never opened up keeping to himself and allowing his

anger and despair to fester just under the surface. All the troupers knew that no good would come of it, but Albert was too absorbed in his own anguish to listen, until the twisting took hold of him.

Current Sketch

When the twisting finally manifested in Albert it did so in the form of spikes. He found that his entire body was covered in thick four-inch long bone spikes. He quickly adapted to his new condition, he found with a little concentration he could hurl the spikes as though they were ranged weapons. He soon started up an act, in which he dressed in black studded leather armour and performs various feats with his spikes. He slings them at targets, knocks things out of onlookers hands, and the trick that gives him his stage name he dives toward a crate and curls into a ball crushing the crate to splinters. Even though he’s now sixteen and is established at the carnival he still dreams about Ingrid and his friends. He has still not opened up to anyone, the rage grows everyday and drives what little innocence he once had from his soul.

Whenever possible Albert has kept tabs on the goings on in Lekar. This combined with a great deal of personal research that he’s done has lead him to believe that the scythe wielding man from that bloody night is somehow the legendary whistling fiend returned after over one hundred and eighty years. Albert has begun researching the fiend and biding his time at carnival until he feels that he could defeat the monster. Albert is growing impatient though, he may soon leave the carnival and begin to hunt his foe, whether his assumption about his identity is correct or not.

Combat

When engaged in melee combat Albert likes to strike his foes with his spike-covered hands. But whenever possible he tries to initiate a grapple and do damage to his foes easily. But his preferred method of attack is to hurl his bone spikes at his foes from a distance.

Intuition (ex): Albert can get a gut feeling about the actions that the murderer of Ingrid and the others. To get this gut feeling he must make a sense motive check (DC 20) the degree of success determines how accurate it is. For further information see VRA pg. 86.

Resolve (ex): When engaged in combat with his nemesis Albert gets a +2 bonus to Constitution and Wisdom.

Spike Storm (ex): Once every day Albert may make a full-attack action and launch every spike on his body into the air at the same time. Anyone within twenty feet of him must make a successful reflex saving throw (DC 14) or take 3d6 points of damage. Success results in taking only half damage.

Body Spikes (ex): Whenever unarmored or wearing his custom made studded leather armour he is considered to have the armour spikes doing 1d6 points of damage to anyone he is grappling with him.

Whispers in the Darkness

Smoke and Mirrors

Funhouse Mirror

Alteration

Level: Sor/Wiz 2

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 50ft + 10ft/level

Target: One humanoid

Saving Throw: Will negates

Duration: 1 hour/level

Spell Resistance: Yes

A person's identity is inextricably tied to their appearance, though appearances are not always what they seem. There is no limit to the chaos and confusion a spell caster can wreak with the ability to alter the appearances of others. Like the image of a funhouse mirror, the shape of another person can be bent, stretched, squashed and shaped into any shape desired. With the casting of this spell, a spell caster can temporarily alter the appearance of another humanoid's face, body, clothing and equipment. This spell can alter their weight, raising it to double or lowering it to half of the original weight. Height can be increased or decreased by one third of the original height. The effects of this spell cannot change the size category of the target, though he or she may appear to observers be of a smaller or larger class. This spell can also be used to alter the apparent sex of the target humanoid.

This spell cannot alter the function of materials, nor can it alter the abilities of the target humanoid. This spell

cannot change ability scores, alter the function of natural weapons, natural armour and neither give nor take away spell like abilities. Weapons and armour, even if disguised, function normally. This alteration extends to the targets voice, and can grant the ability to communicate in any language the caster knows, in the event that the target humanoid would not normally be able to speak. The target of this spell is not aware of any change to his or her appearance unless confronted with evidence indicating the change.

This spell can be used to alter the appearance of the target to resemble a specific individual. This requires a disguise check, made by the spell caster. This check gains a +10 circumstantial bonus. Naturally, if the target of the spell refuses to act the role, then the disguise is somewhat flawed. However, if the spell caster succeeds in his attempt, his target may not get a chance to explain his appearance.

The material component of this spell is a small, warped mirror held in the hand during casting. This focus is not consumed during the casting.

Hall of Mirrors

Alteration

Level: Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 20ft + 5ft/2 levels

Target: One mirror

Duration: 30 minutes +10/level

Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

A hall of mirrors is a labyrinth of reflective surfaces, a confusing maze that bombards those within with false images to confuse and confound their attempts to navigate. Though fragile, a hall of mirrors can overwhelm the strongest intellect and imprison even the ingenious.

With the casting of this spell, a spell caster can turn any mirror into a gateway to a temporary pocket domain. The target mirror must be large enough for a human being to step through. After the casting of the spell, the mirror radiates the effects of a suggestion spell, encouraging characters to step through the mirror. The spell effect radiates in twenty-foot radius around the mirror and continues for the duration of the spell. The DC to resist the suggestion is 17.

Once a victim steps through the mirror the entrance vanishes and he or she is trapped in a Hall of Mirrors. This hall of mirrors is a pocket domain, a huge, convoluted maze. The maze is created by the target's own intellect; the more powerful the mind the more complicated the maze. Escaping the maze requires an amount of time determined by the table below. Creatures with intelligence scores 3 or lower are unaffected by the hall of mirrors.

Intelligence Score	Time to Escape
1-3	0 – not affected
4-6	3 minutes
7-10	7 minutes
11-13	15 minutes
14-16	30 minutes
17-19	1 hour
20+	2 hours

The hall of mirrors is a devious snare. Though finding the way through the maze is difficult, the whole pocket domain is as fragile as glass. If a creature entrapped in the domain decides to attack the mirrors, he can instantly shatter the whole domain and be ejected back into his location just before entering the mirror. Most creatures do not normally think of breaking attacking the mirrors. An NPC must make a wisdom check against a DC of 16 to arrive at this strategy.

Characters aware of the devious nature of the mirror are immune to the suggestion effect. If multiple characters are in the maze at the same time then they are all ejected as soon as any one of their number escapes.

Masquerade

Enchantment

Level: Sor/Wiz 4

Components: V, S, M

Casting Time: 2

Range: 10ft + 5ft/2 levels

Target: One humanoid

Duration: 30 minutes +10 minutes/level

Saving Throw: Will negates

Spell Resistance: Yes

Putting on a mask is similar to donning a whole new identity. Under the guise of a mask, one's true self becomes hidden and protected. The wearer is free to assume the role of his new guise, though sometimes this change is not made by choice. With this spell, a wizard or sorcerer can convince another creature that he is something that he is not. This spell requires the creation of a special mask, which is the focus of this spell. This mask is built to contain a persona created by the caster. Once the construction of the mask is complete, its

persona is permanently set and cannot be changed.

With the casting of this spell the caster instils a delusion into the targets mind. If the target cannot resist the spell, he or she becomes convinced that he is whatever type of creature is depicted by the mask focus. These delusions are identical to the madness effect of the same name; say that the character is not harmed by evidence that contradicts his or her delusions. The target believes the delusions until the end of the duration of the spell. At the end of the spell the character retains no memory from the duration of the spell. This spell can temporarily change a character's alignment, though the character does not suffer effects from involuntary alignment changes.

The material component of this spell is the mask. This mask is not destroyed in the casting, and a single mask can be used on multiple targets to create the same delusions. The duration of the spell can be ended prematurely if the mask used in the casting can be found and destroyed.

Puff of Smoke

Evocation

Level: Sor/Wiz 0

Components: V, S

Casting Time: 0

Range: 20 ft +10ft/level

Target: One area of 30ft diameter

Saving Throw: None

Duration: Instantaneous

Nothing can draw more attention than a flashy spell caster, though such attention may be unwanted. There come times where a spell caster would prefer to divert attention from himself, even if only for a second. With the casting of this spell, a spell caster may cause a great puff of white or black smoke to explode with a flash of light and a loud bang. The eruption is nothing more than a brief distraction and has no effects beyond that. The casting of the spell is extremely simple and is considered a free action. This is a crucial aspect for the very purpose of this spell.

As soon as the spell is cast, the caster may make a bluff check to cause a distraction. This action is described on page 64 of the Players Handbook. When making this bluff check to distract with the casting of the spell, the caster gains a +4 circumstantial bonus to his check. This spell has few applications beyond causing a distraction or impressing unsophisticated folk.

Character Development

The Entertainer

Character Archetype: The entertainer is a human spectacle; he is the musician that plays to a crowded tavern, the clown who capers for coins and the magician that pulls rabbits from hats and saws women in half. Wherever he goes, the entertainer attracts an audience to dazzle with shows of extraordinary expertise. Blessed with talents beyond the norm, the entertainer is caught up in his calling, to entertain the world. The entertainer feeds on the adoration of crowds, their applause is the beating of his heart. Unlike writers, poets or composers, the entertainer relies wholly upon his force of personality to enthrall his audience. This showmanship is the key to his abilities; it is what separates the entertainer from the rank amateurs.

Background: Entertainers come from a range of backgrounds. Most entertainers come from a commoner background. Growing up in the lower or middle class, these young people discover the thrill of performing. They may unlock an unknown talent or they catch the bug from another performer; whatever the case, they are infected with show business. Sometimes a young entertainer is so talented that even his skeptical family cannot deny his abilities. More commonly the young entertainer struggles for a long time to gain the acceptance of his friends and family.

In some cases, an entertainer is born in show business. These young people are fortunate enough to have been raised in the spot light. With show

business in their genes, they happily adopt the life of the entertainer. Many entertainers are lucky to be trained under a mentor. Like an apprentice to a craftsman, the entertainer studies under other entertainers to learn the art.

Personality: The entertainer exists with two distinct personalities, his “on” and “off” guises. In public or before an audience, the entertainer is “on”. In this guise the entertainer is a naturally charming character. He may be suave and mysterious, or he may be open and gregarious. In any case, the entertainer adds power to every word and adds drama to every situation. Each entertainer has a unique style that is reflected in his personality. This personality is carefully chosen to complement his performance. The entertainer instantly makes a strong impression on anyone he meets, indelibly inscribing himself into his or her memories.

In private, the entertainer is “off”, he is free to be himself and rest. Though similar to his “on” guise, he is more withdrawn and much less lively. The effort of performing is taxing, so this is his only time for rest. The entertainer only shows this face to his friends and family, never soiling his extraordinary appearance with reality.

Psychology: The entertainer yearns for attention. While not necessarily an obsessed, the entertainer enjoys attention immensely. The character wants to be the centre of attention, and will do

anything to keep the spotlight on himself. The entertainer has a gift and is driven to share that gift. This gift could be his voice, expertise with an instrument, proficiency in a sport or any other talent. The entertainer will attempt to apply his gift at every opportunity, even in situations where it might not be appropriate. If an entertainer is deprived of his gift, he will likely become morose and depressed. His identity is linked inextricably to expressing his gift. When denied of that ability the entertainer's identity is called into question.

Patterns: The first years of an entertainer's career are the most difficult. The entertainer must craft his "on" guise, which becomes the persona that defines his act. As well, the entertainer must perfect his art. This is a time of experimentation and perfection, the entertainer travels and meets with expert entertainers and learns the secrets of the trade. Most entertainers spend their lives on the road. They travel the world, learning more about their trade and performing to countless audiences. A small few entertainers are more static; they ply their trade in one city.

Entertainers rarely adventure. Some story-telling entertainers, like those found in Kartakas, explore the world to gather new tales. Young entertainers may join adventuring parties as a means of travel. Some entertainers are forced to adventure as a means of supporting themselves during hard times.

Role-playing: An entertainer character needs a dramatic personality. This personality might be a suave man of mystery, a happy-go-lucky clown, a brooding poet or anything else. This

guise must fit the entertainer's act since this guise will be the centre of the performance. In public, entertainers try their best to be charming and endearing. They like to draw attention to themselves, even when it might be wise to be discrete. They like to boast of their talents, hoping to drum up business for themselves. For all their virtues, entertainers can behave like spoiled children. They don't desire leadership but they refuse to be ignored. These characters voice their opinions at any opportunity and offer their own abilities, even in inappropriate situations.

Entertainers are capable of stoically suffering through great hardship but in times of plenty they can be greedy and grasping. Naturally self cantered, entertainers have an insatiable taste for luxuries. They frequently borrow money and other commodities, ever confident that they can repay the loan. Entertainers are prideful and demanding in times of fortune, but also capable of great generosity and selflessness.

Classes and Prestige Classes: The most appropriate class for an entertainer is bard. Some performers might be experts, or even rogues. The virtuoso prestige class is fitting for musically inclined performers. Entertainers who make their act of magic or hypnosis may be magic users.

Suggested Feats: The feats Muse and Skill Focus (perform) are appropriate for an entertainer.

Perilous Pursuits

Carnival Performer

By Jason True

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Silas the sword-swallower pulled the sharp blade out of his mouth and then bowed to the small crowd around him. The villagers applauded as the trouper smiled widely and brandished the long sword that had previously been down his throat.

"Thank you ladies and gentlemen," Silas said to his audience. "Your applause means a great deal to me, but there is one thing that would make this afternoon even better..."

Silas looked at the audience, who all looked back with slightly glazed eyes. The Carnival performer merely smiled wider at the group. Stepping forward to the edge of the stage, he gestured to a wicker basket and said, "You could each donate a gold coin for the entertainment that I provided you his day!"

Each member of the audience slowly stepped forward and dropped their money into the basket. Silas chuckled softly as he listen to the music made by the clinking of metal coins.

Not every entertainer is a bard, and this fact is just as true about the performers who call the Carnival their home. However, anyone who has ever visited the Carnival knows that many of the Troupers have a certain flair for entertainment.

The class Carnival Performer is for those who are more than the average Troupers but aren't necessarily a bard.

Carnival Performer

Rogues and monks are the most qualified to become a Carnival Performer, but anyone can fulfill the requirements may take this prestige class. Fighters and rangers use the abilities of the Carnival Performer to augment their demonstrations of strength. Wizards and sorcerers supplement their magical abilities with these sideshow performances. Clerics use these theatrics to help carry their holy messages to the masses. Bards, while most qualified of any basic class, are least likely to take this prestige class because of the overlap in abilities.

Hit Die: d6.

Requirements

To qualify as a Carnival Performer (Cnp), a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Base Will Save Bonus: +2

Feats: Jaded, Skill focus (perform)

Skills: Perform 6 ranks

Special: The character must have spent enough time in the Carnival to undergo its Twisting effects. If the character should ever leave the Carnival long enough for the Twisting to subside, then they may never again raise their Carnival Performer level, although they retain all of their previously gained class abilities.

Class Skills

The Carnival Performer's class skills (and key ability for each skill) are: Appraise (Int), Balance (Dex), Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Escape Artist (Dex), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Perform (Cha), Pick Pocket (Dex), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Swim (Str), Tumble (Dex), Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier.

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the Carnival Performer prestige class.

Weapon and Armour Proficiency: A Carnival performer gains proficiency in all simple weapons and light armour. Note that armour check penalties for armour heavier than leather apply to the skills Balance, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, Move Silently, Pick Pocket, and Tumble.

Carnival Mask: A carnival performer has grown used to being considered grotesque and strange by another's standards. In fact, the carnival performer has found a way to use their uniqueness as a way to help promote their show. A carnival perform now adds his OR modifier to all of his Performance checks rather than subtracting it from them.

Professional Desensitization: The constant sights and sounds of the Carnival desensitize the performer to certain oddities and strangeness. At first level, the carnival performer gains a +1 bonus to fear and horror checks against these sights (i.e. freak shows, abominations, aberrations, etc.). At third

level, the performer becomes even more used to these sights and gains a +2 bonus to his fear and horror checks. At fifth level, the carnival performer is rather used to interacting with these oddities. He gains a +3 bonus to fear and horror checks when dealing with these creatures.

World Wise: Due to a life of constant travel, a carnival performer learns the ways of the world in which he lives. With a successful wisdom check, with a bonus equal to his class level, the carnival performer may know something about local notables, places, or people. This ability is identical to the bardic knowledge ability with one exception. This ability does not allow the performer to determine information on the subject of legendary items.

Putting on a Show: When a carnival performer plans to use one of his performance based class abilities (fascinate, captivate, suggestion or mass suggestion), the target audience may make a Will save against a DC equal to the carnival performer's perform check. A carnival performer can perform these shows a number of times per day equal to 3 + his Charisma bonus. Each type of show is considered a spell-like, mind-affecting charm ability.

Fascinate: At 2nd-level, the carnival performer is able to perform his act to fascinate a single creature. The creature makes an opposed will save against the perform check. If the Will save is failed then the creature stands quietly and watches the show for up to one round per level of the performer. While fascinated, the target's Spot and Listen checks suffer a -4 penalty. Any potential threat (such as an ally of the performer moving behind the fascinated creature) grants the fascinated creature a

second saving throw against a new perform check.

Captivate: At 3rd-level, the carnival performer's abilities become even more potent. He may spend one of his shows to captivate a group of people. Each member of the audience makes a will save, to throw off the effects. The effects of this ability are identical to hypnotism spell. The carnival performer's show takes one round to perform and can affect 2d4 HD of living creatures, no two of which may be more than 30 feet apart. This effect lasts for 2d4 rounds. As with the hypnotism spell, the targets get a +2 to their saves if the carnival performer attempts this ability in combat.

Suggestion: At 4th-level, the carnival performer's abilities have been honed enough to plant suggestions into an individual's mind. The carnival performer may choose to spend one of his shows to plant a suggestion into an

individual's mind. If the target creature's Will save is failed, then the effects of this ability are identical to the suggestion spell. The suggestion lasts for one hour per carnival performer level.

Mass Suggestion: At 5th-level the carnival performer is at the peak of his abilities. He can now perform a show in order to plant a suggestion into the minds of an entire audience. Each member of the audience may make a will save against the perform check to resist the effects. The effects of this ability are identical to the mass suggestion spell. A maximum of one creature may be affected for every level in the carnival performer prestige class possessed by the performer. No two members of the audience may be more than 30 feet apart. The mass suggestion lasts for one hour per carnival performer level.



The Carnival Performer

Level	Base Attack	Fort	Reflex	Will	Special
	Bonus				
1 st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Carnival Mask, Professional Desensitization +1, World Wise
2 nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	Putting on a Show, Fascinate
3 rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Captivate, Professional Desensitization +2
4 th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Suggestion
5 th	+3	+4	+1	+4	Mass Suggestion, Professional Desensitization +3

Heinrich's Curiosities

The Astounding Artifacts of Professor Arcanus

There are few men who have traveled as far and wide as Professor Arcanus. Like the Vistani who cursed him, the self-professed Professor is a man with no home. His vardo-style wagon rolls where the road takes it, brining his traveling show to all the people of the Core and beyond. Arcanus is a man possessed by a vivid curiosity and an irrepressible aptitude for showmanship. He has combined both of these talents in his traveling show. Wherever he finds a settlement, the Professor opens his show. With masterful showmanship the Professor presents a collection of artifacts collected from the furthest corners of the core. Each item is a unique treasure, carrying a rich history capable of inspiring wonderment or fear.

In his travels through the Demiplane, Professor Arcanus has collected a plethora of artifacts. The professor has collected an amazing assortment of relics; filling is collection with a plethora of exotic artifacts. More a showman than a scholar, the Professor has woven tales of his own creation over many of the items in his show. While these tales fail to relate the history of the items, they more than succeed in grabbing the attention of the audience.

The Blood of Hambal Kamp

The Blood of Hambal Kamp is contained in a small glass vial. The vial is filled with rust colored powder, the clotted remains of ancient blood. The blood has been sealed in the vial with a cork and the vial is labeled with old,

yellowed paper. The vial is stored on a wooden shelf, amongst a collection of similar samples from other werebeasts.

Tale: “The tale of Hambal Kamp began in the forests of Arkandale beneath a pale full moon. A stoic woodsman, Hambal Kamp has been as cautious a man as any other in that dangerous land. Yet one night he found himself far from hearth and home, alone and lost in the darkened forests, being hunted by a monster. It was a huge white wolf, with fangs as long as fingers and yellow eyes that burned like fire.

After hours of silent stalking, the wolf came upon Kamp and seized him in its jaws. A tremendous battle ensued, as the burly ranger pitted his strength against bestial furry. In the end, Kamp snapped the beast's neck. Yet there is not where the tale ends, for though the creature had died, it passed on a horrible cure.

With the rising of the next full moon Hambal Kamp transformed. Beneath the cold light of the stars, Hambal Kamp became the very monster he had slain. For years he stalked the nocturnal wilderness, devouring anything he fell upon. Yet one day he crossed paths with a valiant warrior, who struck him down with a sword of fire. The blood of the beast was turned to dust, stored into a vial, and now sits upon that very shelf.”

Background: The story told by Professor Arcanus was related to him by a bard who sold him the vial. The true story is not so different than Arcanus' own tale, though the true name of the werewolf is lost to time.

Powers: The death throes of the werewolf invoked a transformation, changing the beast back into a man. This enchantment has been trapped within the blood and preserved. If an infected werewolf in lycanthropic shape is exposed to the blood of Hambal Kamp, he or she immediately reverts back into humanoid shape. The lycanthrope will remain in humanoid form for at least 1 hour.

The Book of the Dead

The Book of the Dead is an ancient tome, easily weighing more than thirty pounds. The cover of the book consists of two black metal plates, joined with a series of long thin plates linked to one another to form the spine of the book. The cover is adorned with hieroglyphs, similar to those used in the language of ancient Sebuia of Har' Akiri. The pages of the book are made of thick sheets of parchment, scribed in red ink. The book is exceptionally musty and the pages are extremely delicate.

Tale: "In a land far beyond this one, there is a vast sea of sand. It is the desert of ancient Sebuia, the ocean of the Amber Wastes. A millennia ago, that land thrived with life. There, in that dead wasteland once lived a kingdom of unprecedented splendor. The people worked beneath the ever watchful stare of their God-Kings, rulers born of the divine who served as vessels of the will of the God's themselves. Though mere mortals, these Kings would live forever in death.

Inscribed in the pages of this book are the secrets of immortality. One thousand years ago the jackal headed priests of Death read from this, the Book of the Death. These alien symbols were written in the blood of slaves and depict the mystical rites performed upon the

bodies of the pharaohs. Once the spells within were complete, the body of the King became an immortal vessel for his "Ka", his soul. This sacred text was hidden within the deepest corners of an ancient tomb. A powerful curse lies upon this book, and all who open it are doomed to die.

Background: This book hails from Har' Akiri, it was written by the priests of Ra no more than a decade ago. The book is itself a compilation of funeral spells, which were recorded from the walls of ancient ruins. These spells were bound into the book, making it a powerful magical item and a useful tool to the priesthood. However, the High Priestess feared that the availability of the Book would diminish the need for priests such as herself. Rather than destroy it, the book was sold to a traveling merchant as a curiosity. The book circulated the libraries of private collectors until it was sold to Arcanus for a pittance. The curse of the book is a clever exaggeration, since anyone who reads the book will eventually expire, if only of old age.

Powers: Any character capable of reading the language of Har' Akiri may use the power of the book by taking a full round action to read aloud from the book. Once per day, a character reading from the book may cast *detect undead*, *gentle repose*, *halt undead* and *speak with dead*.

The Shrunken Head

The shrunken head resembles a leathery prune, though on closer inspection its grotesque origin becomes clear. The shrunken head is a leathery sack made of mummified skin. Its eyes and mouth have been sewn shut with thick black thread and the few locks that remain of its hair are a braided lock

adorned with a tiny bone. The shrunken head is stored in a small box, which is illuminated by burning incense candles.

Tale: “There are many lands beyond the edge of the mists, but none so strange as the Wildlands. These verdant lands stretch as far as the horizon, a massive jungle beneath a blazing hot sun. The great green canopy of trees shrouds the secrets of the ancients from the prying eyes.

Henry Stanley held two such prying eyes. A great and fearless explorer, he was the first civilized man to push beyond the edge of the heathen land Shri Raji and enter the forbidden jungles of the Wildlands. There he found great wonders, the ruins of a lost civilization and treasures beyond imagination. He drove his band of adventurers deeper and deeper into the jungle, lost in his wanderlust. After years his men refused to follow him any further, they turned back and returned to civilization. Stanley ventured on further, heedless to the dangers.

It was then, alone and lost, that he was set upon by the most terrible predator within the jungle, the headhunters. An ancient heathen race, these cannibals took him captive. For months he was treated as a guest in their tribe, yet he was warned that should he leave the confines of his prison, he would be hunted as game and his head removed. Though fearful, Stanley could not resist the lure of adventure. He left the tribe and was hunted as an animal. Alone and trapped within the jungle, he fell to the spears of the savages.

His body itself was eaten in a gruesome feast, while his head was shrunken down by their shaman with a secret ritual. The headhunters believe that to possess the head of a man is to

seize his strength and courage. For years his head was passed down from chieftain to chieftain, until now.

Background: The true story of the shrunken head is unknown to the Professor. The head hails from the land of Saragoss, the lethal doldrums that have become the prison for lost mariners of countless worlds. The shrunken head was created by a true headhunter, a mariner like so many others, trapped in the hellish prison of seaweed. In one of the many scrimmages between ships, the headhunter took his grizzly trophy and made it into an item of power.

Through the years of bloody warfare, the head changed hands several times. Eventually, it found its way into the hands of a shipmate who was able to escape the horrible doldrums and reach civilized lands. Though aware of its power, the mariner yearned to be rid of the horrible head and the terrible memories it held for him. He sold it to Arcanus for a fair price, using his own name for the identity of the head.

Powers: The shrunken head is imbued with a primitive but primal magic. The head contains a fraction of the courage and strength of its former owner, granting it to its owner. If the head is carried it grants its owner a +4 moral bonus to any fear or horror check. Furthermore, it grants a +4 moral bonus to will saves to resist mind-influencing effects. The shrunken head must be worn as a necklace to grant this affect.

The head need not be carried to be used. If its owner constructs a shrine-like box to hold the head he may gain its power from afar. To activate the head the owner must make it an offering of wine or rum and burn candles near to it. If this offering is made, the owner gains the bonuses for one day.

Corners of the Core

The Three-Penny Circus

History

The Three-Penny Circus began in Darkon in the year 702. Founded by Walter Baily, the Circus was formed out of individual jugglers, clowns, acrobats and other traveling performers. The Circus proved an excellent means of earning a living; crowds were drawn with greater ease and the numbers made travel safe. The circus expanded as new talents joined the troupe and new staff allowed for more and more elaborate acts. After a time, Baily introduced the Big Tent, a huge tent under which the show could be held in any weather conditions. More importantly, the tent allowed the performers to charge admission, which was kept at the paltry sum of three coppers.

Though he was a dedicated performer, Baily desired nothing more than to return to his family. Once he earned a sizable nest egg, he left the circus to open an inn and passed the circus onto his protégé, Fredrick Ringly. Ringly was a traveling man and took his wife, son and show with him on the road. The circus began a tour of the civilized core, traveling a circuit from Borca in the south, up to Darkon, and down to Nova Vassa, putting on shows at all points in between.

The circus gained fame throughout the core. The annual visits of the circus were times of festivities, and with those from towns that were too small to draw the circus traveling miles to see the show beneath the Big Tent. The animals Ringly brought into the show eclipsed

the human entertainers. Mock bullfights were held with the circus oxen and the draft horses became platforms for acrobatic horseplay. Trained hounds and birds followed, finally over shadowed by the inclusion of tigers from Shri Raja, bought as cubs from a menagerie in Il Aluk.

Ringly died in 735 and left the circus to his son, Barnum. Sadly, Barnum proved to be a poor businessman and many performers left the circus. Over the years the quality of the circus fell and its reputation declined. The frequency of the circus' visits dropped and the troupe lost the familiarity it once enjoyed with the villagers it entertained. Barnum replaced his missing performers with sideshows and games. These sideshows were seedy affairs, filled with strange freaks and abnormal talents like blockheads and geek acts. The games were even less savory; most of the lot being little better than fixed dice games. Now viewed with a mistrust reserved for outsiders, the circus became a shady place. No longer a place for unsupervised children, the circus became a shadowy den of sin, vice and darkly amusing oddities.

By 755 little has changed. The circus continues on, performing shows for audiences in the coastal corners of the Core. The show still draws crowds, filling the air with laughs and the lively if manic music of the calliope. There is a strange air of unease beneath the big tent, and those who walk the grounds

soon realize that nothing is what it seems.

The Circus

Wherever the circus sets down, it arranges itself in a particular manner. The rear of the grounds is comprised of the vardo-style wagons that house the performers and carry their goods. This makeshift village forms a tight ring, surrounding the wagon of the owner, Barnum Ringly. The outer wagons are used as improvised dressing rooms and storage shelters for the props and equipment to be used in the show. Numerous animal cages flank these wagons, housing the show animals.

Just before the wagons stands the Big Tent. The tent is a huge structure made of thick canvas and supported by collapsible wooden poles and huge ropes on the outside. The big tent comprises of a large ring sixty feet in diameter, which faces bleachers large enough to seat more than three hundred people. These stands are always crowded with men, women and children as well as vendors parading up and down the rows, selling expensive snack foods and watered down alcoholic beverages. At the opening of the big tent stands the admission booth, which collects three coppers from anyone entering the tent. Shows are held a number of times each day, increasing or decreasing in number to accommodate the crowd.

Before the tent lies the sideshows. These are a tangled shantytown of strange tents and wagons, painted in brilliant colors but obscured in the shadows of the big tent. These tents hold a startling variety of freaks, geeks and other performers. These performers are not considered full members of the Circus; they come and go with the months. At any time there are at least

one fortuneteller, magician, circus geek and a dozen freaks and other human oddities. With all tents at capacity, the sideshows can keep roughly one hundred people occupied. The performer and the barker, who takes admission and draws the audience in, operate the tents.

In front of the sideshows are the games. Run by the people known as "carnies", these games are a wide assortment of diversions. These games change as carnies come and go, but at most times the games include a crossbow target range, a ring toss, a roulette wheel, a card game, a strength test and a fighting ring where a retired prizefighter takes on challengers for a modest fee. The prizes for success in these games are always cheaply made souvenirs, though they are rarely given out. All of the games are fixed by the carnies. Those customers who actually win have triumphed only because the carnies allow a few rubes to win to maintain the illusion of a fair game. Throughout the Circus are vendors and stands selling over priced foodstuffs and watered down alcohol. Numerous cheap souvenirs are sold throughout the Circus grounds.

Between the sideshows and the games are the temporary structures known collectively as the "rides". The first of the rides is the carrousel, a gaily-painted platform supporting wooden horses. The carrousel spins slowly, powered by a team of four oxen pushing a wheel attached to the platform by gears. The next ride is the Fun House, a small building made of cheap wood. The fun house is a series of rooms, filled with fake skeletons, bats on strings, and other effigies of monsters and ghosts. Finally there is the Hall of Mirrors, a structure containing a short maze made of mirrors.

Each ride is monitored by a carnie, who collects admission at the door.

Circus Folk

Barnum Ringly, the manager, owns the Circus. Ringly is a man in of perpetual middle age, standing little more than five feet tall and somewhat fat he rarely leaves his wagon without his black waistcoat and top hat. Ringly is a ruthless despot; he abuses the performers and circus animals without provocation. Years ago Ringly drove off most of the circus troupe, yet recently the flow of performers has been severed. Ruthlessly he shakes down the carnies for his cut of their profits, charging them rent for the space they take on the circus grounds. Wary of violence, he is usually accompanied by his bodyguards, Gondor the strong man and Enigma the Blockhead.

Henry Gladspell is the ringmaster of the circus. The aging performer once was a talented magician, but joined the circus when old age stiffened his hands. Gladspell is a large man who commonly dresses in a black top hat, white trousers, and a shockingly red jacket with matching tails. Possessed of a booming voice, Gladspell introduces the circus acts and does his best to excite the crowd between acts. In his free hours Gladspell patrols the circus grounds, performing magic tricks and greeting visitors. Despite his jovial appearance, Gladspell is very uneasy. The ringmaster suspects something very wrong is at work in the circus, though he cannot remember what it is that so disturbs him.

“The Great Parchuto” runs the sideshow in the shadow of the Big Tent. The magician extraordinaire holds his own magic show in the sideshow and helps to manage the freaks and performers. Parchuto and his association

of freaks and oddities resent the lack of respect that Ringly shows them, but since they need Ringly more than he needs them, there is little they can do but take the abuse and give up half of their earnings. The freaks hail Parchuto as a genius for his aptitude for creating popular exhibits. Presently his most successful is the exhibit billed as “The 200 Pound Man-Eating Chicken”, which consists of a fat man eating a baked chicken.

A man known only as Otto leads the carnies who run the games and rides. Otto is a thin, short man with a pointy nose and a shabby beard. Rat like in both appearance and demeanor, Otto tries to cheat his fellow carnies as often as they cheat the crowds. Otto and his son Cooter run the ring toss, but he also collects Ringly’s share of the profits and skims off of the top.

There are more than a dozen circus performers, including acrobats, animal trainers, clowns, jugglers and riders. These performers are a sullen lot and do not socialize with people out side of the circus. The side shows are run by nearly two dozen freaks, including a Fat Man, a dog faced boy, a half vistani fortune teller, a bearded woman and a halfling family. There are nearly thirty carnies running the games and rides. These shady people come from all the lands of the core, united by their ability to con rubes out of coin.

Adventure Hooks

Henry Gladspell, the Ringmaster approaches the characters. The ringmaster suspects that the owner, Barnum Ringly, is using some foul means of keeping the performers in the circus. He asks the characters to investigate the matter.

The players are tracking a murderer and have followed his trail to a clearing beside a village, where his tracks have been obliterated. When the villagers are questioned, they do indeed recall seeing the suspect, as a performer in the circus. The players can easily track the progress of the Circus, though the performers may be very unwilling to turn over one of their own to outsiders.

A village calls upon the players to find missing children. Several children were lost when the circus came to town. The villagers were unable to thoroughly search the grounds, and Barnum's goons chased off any who tried to find the children. Hopefully, the players may be able overtake the circus and find the lost children before something horrible befalls them.

Tome of the Guardians

The Calliope

The Calliope

The calliope is a large pipe organ, made of fine dark wood and masterfully carved. The pipes are made of shining brass and the keys are comprised of solid ivory. The bottom four corners of the calliope are elevated above the ground by wheels, which make pushing the calliope much easier. The whole instrument weighs roughly two hundred pounds and fifty pounds. To any observer, the Calliope is identical to any other small organ. The item can be played by any character with a rank in the skill perform devoted to piano, harpsichord or organ. The calliope produces a short range of sounds, many of them high pitched. The music produced by the calliope is described as lively and cheery, though some listeners may detect a manic undertone to any tune played.

The history of the calliope began with its current owner, Barnum Ringly. In the year 735 Barnum Ringly inherited ownership of the Three Penny Circus, a great traveling show that toured the Core. The son of its founder, Ringly had been raised on the road and been taught to love the life of a traveling circus. Naturally, he was deeply attached to his show and threw himself into the task of managing the circus. Yet while his enthusiasm was genuine, his managerial skills were wanting. As the years past the circus earned less and less, and the performers became disgruntled. Ringly reacted to their malcontent by becoming authoritarian and abusive. Little by

little, the performers began to leave. The number of performers dwindled and Barnum was forced to make changes. To increase the appeal of the show, Barnum hired on laborers to run “side shows”. Combining gambling and small con jobs with the circus, Barnum was able to create a larger troupe. He offered protection and employment to freaks and other oddities, enlarging the size of his show. While the circus grew, the measures only isolated the performers even further. More and more of the performers left, those that remained organized themselves against Ringly.

One night Ringly met with a representative of the performers. The two argued fiercely for hours, eventually coming to blows. Ringly struck the man and sent him crashing into the old circus pipe organ. The performer struck his head on a corner and split his skull. Immediately Ringly set about erasing the evidence, he buried the body and incinerated the bloodied organ. The performers were easily convinced that their friend had simply walked off of the job and the circus continued on. Days latter, Ringly stopped the circus in Darkon to commission the creation of a new organ. Ringly sought out a gnome craftsman of musical instruments and commissioned the creation of a special pipe organ. Ringly demanded an instrument that could play such a lively tune that it would entrance the listener and draw an audience to the circus. Ringly spared no expense in the creation of the calliope for he funded the construction with gold stolen from his

murder victim. Before long Ringly possessed his new Calliope. The organ's tune was unlike that of any other device, creating a merry piping that drew crowds to the circus. Little did Ringly suspect that his own evil was carried in the song.

The Calliope slowly grew in power. Ringly's possessiveness gave the Calliope the power to enslave the performers of the circus, binding them to the traveling show. Little by little the insidious tune worked its way into their minds, mesmerizing them and erasing their discontent. As the months past, the Calliope began to erase the memories of the performers, rewriting their thoughts so they forgot any life beyond the Three Penny Big Top. With giddy joy, Ringly played the Calliope with every free moment, working its magic upon the men and women who had become his slaves. Yet, as the years past the music began to invade his own thoughts. Ringly himself had become slave to the Calliope.

The Calliope rules the circus through Ringly. It cares nothing for the meaningless details of management or commerce. All that it desires is to draw crowds to the Circus and feed upon their wonderment. Though this hunger for joy might seem benign, the Calliope is a cruel taskmaster. The demonic organ has enslaved the minds of the Circus performers and erased all memory of the outside world. The circus is always moving, always seeking fresh audiences. The performers are denied any rest, each day is filled with long rides, tiring chores and exhausting routines. The magic of the calliope causes these performers to age rapidly, growing older by one year for each month. Those who please the crowds are given a form of immortality. Playing the calliope for one hour of time allows a victim to resist both the natural

and supernatural forces of aging. To replace lost performers, the calliope mesmerizes outsiders. These innocents are entrapped in the circus and doomed to live beneath its tent.

Only Ringly knows of the fiendish nature of the Calliope. Though he despises the demonic organ, he dares not displease it. Ringly fears to age and is terrified to lose the circus. For this reason, the organ has allowed Ringly to retain his memory. He will do whatever he can to protect the Calliope and actively works to protect it. The performers are unaware of any foul magic since their memories are constantly erased. The Calliope has no attachment to the simple carnival folk who run the sideshows. It views these people with the same disdain as Ringly, caring nothing for them as long as they earn their keep and help draw the crowd.

The musical ability of the Calliope is phenomenal, though it cannot play itself. Anyone who plays the organ gains a +10 bonus to any perform check. The Calliope can bestow the bardic abilities *fascinate* and *suggestion* to anyone playing it. Once each day the calliope can cast lesser geas on anyone listening to its song. This geas is always the same command, victims are forbidden to leave the circus. Those who do suffer the ability drain until they return. Most explain this effect as having show business in their blood or homesickness. The duration of the lesser geas is permanent, it can only be ended with the destruction of the calliope. Furthermore, all those under the geas lose all memories of the outside world. Their memories are subtly altered so that they believe that they have spent their whole lives in the Circus, though they can no longer remember how long they have lived.

While under the geas, a victim ages one year for each month. Playing the calliope for one hour can halt this aging.

The Calliope is invincible to physical or magical attacks. There is but one manner by which to destroy the fiendish device. The calliope must be burned as someone plays upon it. This requires the calliope to be ignited with oil, alcohol or magic means. The fire

consumes the organ in 1 minute, dealing 1D8 fire damage each round to whoever plays the organ. Though the Calliope fears this fate, it is compelled to force one of its slaves to play it whenever it is ablaze. The nearest character under its geas is compelled, as if by the spell domination (no will save), to play the organ until it is destroyed.

Twist and Shout

New Twisting Effects

By Jason True

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DM: *As mourning dawns you are awoken by the sounds of the carnival performers going about their chores. As you rise, you are shocked to notice that you have grown a second pair of arms in the night.*

Player: *Why two arms?*

DM: *Your character has been traveling with the Carnival for over a week now and Tindal warned him that he would have to deal with the Twisting if he stayed too long.*

Player: *Yeah, I understand that much. Why a four arms?*

DM: *Well, you kept saying that your character was always working with his hands...*

The Carnival is one of the safest and one of the most dangerous places to live. While the Mistress of the Carnival, Isolde, protects everyone that lives within the Carnival, the price of this protection can be horrific. The toll is paid in blood and bone as each person's body is slowly changed to reflect their inner selves. Thus is the effect of the Twisting.

The original Carnival accessory listed twenty different possible types and effects that the Twisting might have upon a person. These effects depend largely upon the personality and quirks that the person may have. Below, are sixteen more twisting effects to help fill the ranks of your Carnival setting. To use the table, you can either choose a

particular Carnival Troupier that fits the character being twisted or you can roll the dice (2d10) and reference the table to determine what effects occur. The different twist effects are divided by the character traits that inspired the effect.

Agitated and Hyperactive

- 2) **The Living Lightning:** As a child he was forever moving from one place to another. The young boy annoyed his parents with his fast-talking and constant activity. When this hyperactive youth entered the Carnival, he became the Living Lightning. Jagged, black stripes now cover his entire body and make him look like a lightning covered sky. This character can now take an extra partial action each round and gains a +4 AC bonus due to the Twisting's effect. The negative effect of this increased metabolism is the increased nutritional requirements. The character must eat and drink twice as much as a normal person and rest for twelve hours each day or will be fatigued from the strain. While fatigued the character suffers a -2 penalty to strength and dexterity and cannot charge or run.
- 3) **The Human Conductor:** This man was fidgety and anxious

most of his life. Never able to sit still for very long, he was a social outcast. In the Carnival, this antsy individual has become the Human Conductor. Electricity now literally travels through his veins and allows him to gather powerful charges and electrocute a person (as per *shocking grasp*) up to three times each day. Unfortunately, this affinity causes the Human Conductor to be constantly surrounded by static electricity and suffers a -2 penalty to any save to resist all electrical attacks.

Indifferent or Stoic

- 4) **The Stone Princess:** The stone princess was so indifferent to the world around her that she would literally sit for hours, oblivious to what occurred. Now her body has twisted to allow her to do this much more easily. Her skin has petrified into stone granting her damage reduction 15/+1. Sadly this stony hide resists activity as strongly as her apathetic mind. She may only take partial actions and suffers a -2 penalty to Armour class and Reflex saves.
- 5) **The Forgotten Man:** Always quiet and emotionally distant, this man was overlooked and forgotten by those who were around him. Living this life of self-imposed solitude, the Twisting gave him the look to go with his attitude towards life. The Forgotten Man is now covered in a perpetual blanket of dust and spider webs. Even the most strenuous effort to cleans

him lasts for a few moments. In seconds his body is coated in a blanket of neglect. Once each day the Forgotten Man can create a cloud of obscuring dust about him. This effect is identical to an *obscuring mist* spell; say that uses dirt in place of water.

Fated or Prophetic

- 6) **Fool of the Fates:** The Fool of the Fates always blamed someone or something else for his misfortune. To any failing he would cry foul and curse his bad luck. Now he sports a third eye in the middle of his forehead that allows him to see into the future and foresee the best courses of action. This effect allows him to cast the *augury* spell. However the price of divination is not cheap. For each use of this ability, he suffers a cumulative -1 luck penalty to all rolls for the rest of the day.
- 7) **The False Prophet:** This man used to claim that he could talk with the spirits in order to learn hidden secrets and gain useful advice. While these claims were once nothing but lies, the Twisting has changed him so he needn't change his ways. The False Prophet is now able to *speak with dead* three times a day in order to gather his information, however, this connection with spirits and the afterlife has sucked the vitality out of his body. He is now a thin and withered shell of the man that he used to be (-2 Con and -2 Cha).

Clumsy or Ungraceful

- 8) **Sausage Woman:** Always tripping over her own feet, the Sausage Woman no longer has that problem. After coming to the Carnival, her arms and legs shrivelled up to nothing more than tiny nubs on the sides of her body. While there are definite disadvantages to not having arms and legs, the Sausage Woman has learned to adapt without them. With her mouth she is able to wield tools and weapons with the same skill she might have with hands. By hopping and wriggling, the sausage woman can move with a base speed of 30. Her size class is lowered by one. As well, her new form grants her a +10 racial bonus to escape artist and tumbling checks.
- 9) **The Amazing Monkey Boy:** At a young age it became clear that his hands were too clumsy for most work. Others would tease him that he should find another way to do such fine manipulations. The Twisting granted him such a way by giving him a long prehensile tail. This tail acts in all aspects as a third arm with multi-dexterity and multi-weapon fighting already applied to it. However, the Amazing Monkey Boy also gained a baboonish face and hairy body to go with this tail. As a result, his outsider rating increases by 2.

Defensive or Protective

- 10) **The Mock Turtle:** Some people feel like the world is out to get them; they know that they have to do everything in their power to defend themselves. The Mock Turtle is such a man; he has shut out the rest of the world to protect himself. Wearing armour or covering himself with protective spells, this man has been granted a thick carapace by the Twisting. This shell, which covers his back, abdomen and parts of his limbs, grants him a +5 natural armour bonus. However, the bulky and heavy shell causes him to have a -2 dexterity penalty.
- 11) **Human Shield:** The Human Shield was the person who would always fear for the safety of others. To this martyr, it did not matter if they were family, friends, or just innocent bystanders; this person would do all that he could to ensure that nothing bad happened to those around him. This protective nature was so intense that Twisting granted his greatest wish. The Human Shield now creates a permanent *protection from arrows* in a ten-foot radius for anyone but himself. Instead, in any combative encounter his enemies must make a will save against a DC 20 or else be forced to automatically choose the Human Shield as their primary target.

Loyal and Obedient

- 12) **The Dog-Faced Man:** The Dog-Faced Man was the kind of

friend that could always be counted upon. He was always there when he was needed and he never asked questions as to why he had to do something. His loyalty was unshakable even after he changed into what he is today. The Twisting has granted him the scent ability of a common hound. Yet in the process it has altered his face, covering every inch it in thick hair, raising his outsider rating by 1.

- 13) **Gator Man:** This man was the one who would feel another's pain; he is the shoulder for them to cry upon and the sympathetic ear to receive their sobs. Yet, this loyalty was not as altruistic as his friends believed it to be. As the Twisting set in, it gave him the physique to go with the "alligator tears" that he would shed. This man now has small scales all over his body as well as a massive jaw of sharp teeth (natural AC +4 and a bite attack of 1d6). His nature is now all but impossible to hide and it makes it hard for others to trust him. As a result, his outsider rating is increased by 2.

Gossipy or Gregarious

- 14) **The Frog-Mouthed Man:** Like many a loudmouth or braggart, this man was known for saying things before really thinking about their implications. Now this man can really put his foot in his mouth since his lips stretch from ear to ear. The Frog-Mouthed Man looks much like his namesake with a wide mouth and long tongue, but this

allows him to make touch attacks up to ten feet away with his sticky and extendable tongue.

- 15) **The Queen Bee:** There are woman who like to gossip, and then there is the Queen Bee. This woman was notorious for nosing her way into the business of others and spreading the buzz no matter how much trouble it caused. These actions allowed the Twisting to change her into the Trouper that she is today. She gained a pair of filmy wings and a poisonous stinger, but her looks and speech are changed to something inhuman. She is almost entirely covered in short yellow and black hair, and her words come out as nothing more than a merely buzzing drone.

Low Self-image

- 16) **The Starving Artist:** The Starving Artist was a woman who was constantly afraid that she was too fat. She would constantly deny herself food in order to shed extra pounds, no matter how emaciated she became. When she joined the Carnival, the Twisting changed her in a way that allows her to continue getting thinner. The Starving Artist continues to lose weight, but she is under the effects of a constant *sustenance* ability (as per the ring). Therefore, she keeps losing weight but doesn't have the ill effects of not eating. The downside is that she has been deprived of food for so long that her stomach can no longer tolerate any form of food or

drink. Anything that she tries to consume is immediately regurgitated.

- 17) **The Human Mole:** Never one to take care of his hygiene or appearance, the Human Mole has now been given the physique to match his habits. The Twisting has wrapped the body into that of a human-mole hybrid. The squinted eyes and gnarled hands allow this Trouper to see in the darkness (dark vision 60 feet) and burrow through the earth (burrow speed equal to base movement rate). The change has made the Human Mole much more at home in the dirt, though. Anytime the Human Mole is above ground in the bright sunlight or equivalent spell, he

suffers a -2 penalty to all attack rolls.

Miscellaneous:

- 18) **DM's option:** The DM selects any one of the above options or creates an entirely new type of Twisting specifically for that character.
- 19) **Player's option:** Player selects any one of the above options or creates an entirely new type of Twisting specifically for that character.
- 20) **Twisting Postponed:** For one reason or another, the Twisting has failed to take effect for another day. It is only a matter of time before it occurs, but the character wasn't affected today. Roll again on the next day.

Growls in the Night

Creepings, Fidgets, and Crawlers

By David Gibson

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Treatise on the Effects of the Twisting on Lesser Creatures

By Professor Pacali

I began my time with the accursed Carnival some many months ago. The details of how I encountered them are irrelevant; it is what I discovered afterwards that is important to this work. After some weeks of journeying along with the troupe, the Twisting began its foul transformation on my body. Not content to sit idly by like so many of my ignorant and misled companions, I set out to study the effects of the Twisting.

Experimenting on human (or rather the formerly human) subjects would prove difficult to justify and explain. Therefore, I turned my eye to the vermin that litter the areas between the vardos; the so-called creepings or fidgets. I spent some weeks observing the creatures and their habits. During several of my brief sabbaticals back to Darkon I dissected a few of the wriggling monstrosities. Hideous things really, but I have become accustomed to far worse. My expectations were low, but I discovered surprising information and my subjects proved to be more intriguing than I originally thought.

This short treatise is the result of those tedious labors. I write it not only for myself to preserve my thoughts lest the Twisting also affect my mind as well as my frame, but also as an assurance that come what may someone might

follow in my footsteps. My future plans are perilous and my safety is not guaranteed, but enough of such musings...

Introduction

For those with little experience in the Carnival of Isolde, I offer this brief introduction. The Twisting alters the appearance of any living thing that spends more than a few days in the Carnival, or rather within a certain radius of Isolde and her reality wrinkle. However, since Isolde seldom leaves the Carnival or the proximity of her wagon, the two are the same. The Twisting affects all living things, plant and animal alike. Since the Carnival moves so frequently, the Twisting does not affect the surroundings. However some animals, drawn by the dark power of Isolde or searching for stray crumbs of food, follow along and become altered by the wrinkle. The common carnies have labelled them either creepings or fidgets depending on their fancy at the time. To the average dim-witted Trouper or Skurra, no difference is made between the two.

Creepings and fidgets are a broad name given to a diverse species with each one being unique and different. Body shape, length of teeth, eye and hair colour all widely vary between creepings. They are generally described as being sneaky creatures eager to relieve visitors of small trinkets and

morsels of food. The Twisting is just assumed by the uneducated masses to affect every beast in generally the same manner. There is the theory that the Twisting plays off the psyche of the individual when determining the final form; that the transformation is some form of punishment or justice. While I reject this obviously deterministic view of the Twisting, the nature of the individual does play some part in the final form. Animals, possessing less personality and individuality, find themselves separated into three varieties.

Sub-species

While the average Trouper may be satisfied in categorizing all Twisted animals into one race, the scientifically minded, like me, notice certain prevalent characteristics among the beasts. There are the sly and sneaky ones that prefer to stick to the shadows beneath the vardos or the corners of vision. There are curious and thieving ones more interested in stealing small shiny objects than staying out of sight. Lastly, there are the slow partially lame ones whose Twisted condition leaves them dragging on the ground but makes them tough and hardy. I have therefore named the three creeplings, fidgets, and crawlers respectively.

Creeplings tend to be quiet secretive animals both before and after the Twisting. Cats and small quiet dogs make up the majority of creeplings, although there are a fair number that were previously bats, skunks and even a young wolf pup that followed after us. They are sleek and smooth creatures and the most uniform of Twisted animals. There are almost no mismatched limbs or combinations of different species in creeplings. Their fur is universally dark and smooth favouring black but also

brown or a deep red. Their eyes tend to be bright and shiny colours, mostly yellows and reds, catching and reflecting light in an unnerving manner. Creeplings are by far the most common of the breeds.

What I have separated as fidget are the less secretive and more curious of the Twisted beasts. They are attracted to shining and bright objects and have a tendency to hoard and collect trinkets. They are larger and just slightly slower than creeplings and almost always have at least dexterous paw or hand. Most often they are Twisted rats, weasels, and raccoons but after a trip to a small tropical land there were a couple monkeys added to the ranks. They range in colour but mostly they are browns and greys with the occasional reddish or tan fidget. There is much less symmetry among fidgets as most second-generation creatures are fidgets, but also because of divided instincts. Because the animals are both drawn away from and pulled towards humans, their bodies reflect this schism and are less symmetrical.

Crawlers are the last variety of Twisted animals. They get their name from their form of locomotion, which consists of crawling and dragging themselves across the ground. They are either so badly twisted that they can no longer quickly move, such as being too long or large for their legs to work, or they simply lack enough limbs. Crawlers come from territorial and protective animals as well as those who commonly lack legs such as snakes. Reptiles in general become crawlers due to their sluggish behaviour. A high percentage of crossbred creatures are crawlers with their mismatched limbs proving awkward to use. Crawlers are sturdy and hardy creatures prone to silently

observing their surroundings. At first I was at a loss to explain why so many territorial and protective animals become crawlers, but eventually I realized the truth. By becoming lame they are forever close to whatever they guard, they cannot move far away. Crawlers tend to have large eyes and ears that slowly follow movement. There has been more than one George that has been convinced a crawler was a statue or stuffed animal only to jump when they finally twitched.

When first reviewing my work, an associate asked why there were no aggressive or loud animals. He brought up the example of a small yapping dog known for throwing itself at other creatures no matter the size. He questioned which category such a creature would become. After much thought I realized that such a beastly animal would not be suited for any of the three subspecies. It did not take me long to realize why. Such a horrid little animal would quickly be removed from the Carnival before the Twisting had time to take effect. Most animals that succumb are those that fall along without being seen, hence the prevalence of creeplings. An annoying mutt would quickly draw attention to itself and be ejected or slain, as would any hostile or vicious creature.

Biology and Habits

Creeplings, to use the most common term for clarity, have more in common with each other than their previous species. As such making broad generalization is not a dilemma. Of course, as with anything related to these infuriatingly chaotic creatures, there are exceptions to this.

Creeplings are omnivorous and able to eat plants and animals. In

practice, creeplings are able to live on just about anything. Few are fed by anyone on a regular basis, although that loner Skurra, nicknamed the Organ Grinder, has a few favourites to which he gives some small morsels. Instead, the creeplings eat what they can from dropped food and discarded trash. They supplement this with occasional prey they catch in the woods, mice and small birds are the most common. Larger insects and fish are also consumed. Sometimes they even take a wayward pet of some unobservant visitor. If they cannot watch their own property, then they deserve no sympathy. It is also not uncommon for curious youngsters to feed creeplings in hopes of getting a better look or taking one away for their homes. Sometimes I think I would like to see the reaction of their parents to the new pet. Fidgets tend to be less self-reliant nuzzling against visitors and friendly Troupers for food; they often attach themselves to someone for regular table scraps. Creeplings and crawlers tend to fend for themselves.

Creeplings have a distinct sound unlike anything else I have heard. Most are silent, preferring to quietly enter and leave without announcing their presence. However, like all animals, they can make a sound if aroused enough. The call of the creeplings is a mixture of many different species that each individual seems to pick up. Their primal grunts and growls are intermixed with yelps and barks. They purr pleasantly enough when happy. Most unnervingly, some creeplings pick up the occasional human word, or make sounds close enough to catch the attention. The words tend to be random and common enough to be accidental, but there is still something unnatural about hearing an animal spit out something in Darkonese.

That simpleton Tindal sometimes like to amuse himself by telling visiting children that the creeplings learn people's names and use them to lure unsuspecting children away from their parents. He claims he uses it to keep wandering infants from exploring where they are not wanted or could get hurt, but I suspect he gets more than a little enjoyment from it.

Creeplings have set nests scattered about the vardos. They find the isolated spaces between furniture or under objects and turn it into a comfortable bed. Scraps of cloth, grass and paper are gathered or stolen to pad this small lair. Creeplings live solitarily and it is very uncommon to see two share a nest although there may be more than one in a wagon. Some creeplings prefer a more rugged life and take up a location under or above the vardos, while others sleep wherever they can find a shady spot.

Creeplings spend most of their time eating and sleeping interspersed with hunting, stealing and playing. While I hesitate to call their activities 'playing', as it seems to denote intelligence, I can think of no better word. Creeplings amuse themselves by chasing or stalking a victim creepling or engaging it in non-lethal fights. It is not uncommon to see a creepling bounding from roof to roof or dashing across a path followed by a small group of pursuers. When caught, another begins to run and is chased by the pack. Activities do vary by subtype. Creeplings spend more time sleeping and lurking while fidgets are more active and more likely to be stalking or stealing. Crawlers seldom play preferring to hunt or stake out their chosen territory.

One of the more interesting and surprising subjects of creepling biology

is their reproduction. At first, I assumed that all creeplings were sterile or could only breed with animals of similar backgrounds. For example, twisted cats only mating with other Twisted cats. As it turned out I was wrong, all creeplings can interbreed freely with each other! Their Twisting gives them more in common with each other than their previous race. These second and third generation creeplings have a mixture of traits leading to creeplings with both fur and scales or winged reptilian beasts. Interbred creatures tend to become fidgets and crawlers more than pure creeplings. Gender is had to pin point with creeplings, as there is little variety between males and females. On average, males tend to be slightly larger or wider and also less active. This is by no means universal. Gender differences only come into play during courtship activities.

There is little real courtship or bonding between creeplings. When in heat, which happens once or occasionally twice a year, they simply pick a convenient mate and find a secluded place. Males often wander from partner to partner having no instinct telling them to stay. There is some competition between males to make themselves available for breeding. As the more visible creeplings get chosen, they go to lengths to distract or immobilize their competition. It is one of the few times creeplings actively seek to harm each other, although deaths or permanent injury are rare. Males also try to attract attention by moving around quickly to show stamina and strength or climbing and jumping from vardos to vardos. Mating season is one of the few times creeplings do not attempt to hide.

Creeplings are born live like mammals, even from previously reptilian animals. They are usually born

in twos or threes, although a fourth runt is occasionally born but usually proves too small and weak to survive. Creeplings, however, do not nurse their young. Instead they hunt for extra food and bring small scraps to feed their infants. Creepling pups remain in the nest and are cared for by the mother. Fathers have no paternal instinct and after the mating is done they return to their regular activities. Pups are small and helpless for the first few weeks of life. My experiments show that if

separated from their mother they quickly stave to death collectively. Interestingly, pups do not resort to cannibalism if starved and all die as a group rather than consume their own. Pups begin walking at two weeks. After three weeks of age pups are self sufficient enough to attempt to hunt on their own although they continue to live in the maternal nest until they are at least two months old. Pups can be considered fully mature by three to four months of age.

Creepling

Tiny Animal
Hit Dice: 1d4
Initiative: +4 (Dex)
Speed: 40ft.
AC: 16 (+4 Dex, +2 Natural)
Attack: 2 claws +2 melee, bite +1 melee
Damage: Claw 1d3, bite 1d3-1
Face/Reach: 2 ½ ft. by 2 ½ ft. 0 ft.
Special Attacks: -
Special Qualities: -
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2
Abilities: Str 3, Dex 18, Con 13, Int 3, Wis 11, Cha 7
Skills: Balance +9, Climb +2, Hide +8, Listen +4, Move Silently +7, Spot +4
Feats: Skill Focus (Hide), Weapon Finesse (claw)

Fidget

Tiny Animal
Hit Dice: 1d4+1
Initiative: +3 (Dex)
Speed: 30ft.
AC: 15 (+3 Dex, +2 Natural)
Attack: 2 claws +3 melee, bite +2 melee
Damage: Claw 1d3, bite 1d3-1
Face/Reach: 2 ½ ft. by 2 ½ ft. 0 ft.
Special Attacks: -
Special Qualities: -
Saves: Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +2
Abilities: Str 3, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 3, Wis 7, Cha 7
Skills: Balance +5, Climb +3, Hide +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +5, Pick Pocket +6, Spot +6
Feats: Weapon Finesse (claw, bite)

Crawler

Hit Dice: 1d4+6
Initiative: -1 (Dex)
Speed: 10ft.
AC: 11 (-1 Dex, +2 Natural)
Attack: Bite +3 melee
Damage: Bite 1d4
Face/Reach: 2 ½ ft. by 2 ½ ft. 0 ft.
Special Attacks: -
Special Qualities: -
Saves: Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +3
Abilities: Str 4, Dex 9, Con 15, Int 3, Wis 11, Cha 7
Skills: Balance +6, Hide +5, Listen +7, Move Silently +5, Spot +9
Feats: Toughness, Weapon Finesse (bite)

Climate/Terrain: Any land/ The Carnival

Organization: Solitary or Pack (2d4)

Challenge Rating: 1/3

Treasure: None (Fidgets have coins or gems)

Alignment: Always Chaotic Neutral

Advancement: -

Special Abilities: Some Twisted animals, mostly crawlers, have alternate

methods of movement. By increasing the CR by 1/3 a crawler can burrow, fly, or swim. The maximum speed is never

more than 30ft and never more than two times the speed on land. Flying creeplings have a manoeuvrability of *poor* or *clumsy* depending on their size and dexterity. Some rare creeplings also possess the extraordinary ability *Blindsight* through the use of scent, echolocation, or tremor sense.

Familiars

Not all animals follow the Carnival like furry moths drawn to the flame of food and fiends. Some stay because their masters do. While my knowledge of the arcane arts is scant I have recently begun to learn. However, due to the nature of my Twisting I have troubles bonding with animals so I rely on second hand information for this section.

Familiars, animals bonded to wizards and sorcerers, are just as affected by the Twisting as any other animal. Although as magical beasts they are more intelligent and tied to their master so their Twistings tend to be more unique than other animals of the same type. They are partially subject to the Twisting on their master as well as that of their own. Whether this is because of the magical bond between the two or because familiars are similar in temperament to their masters I do not know.

There have been many wizards and arcane types who have journeyed with the Carnival for a short time. Many of them came to study the Twisting, and others of them to escape persecution. Their sort tends to attract ignorant masses angry for warlock blood. At least the ignorant masses in the Carnival have a tolerance for the bizarre. So given the number of wizards I have seen, I can attempt to summarize some of the more common effects of familiars.

Bats are blind nocturnal hunters and stay that way. The few I have seen Twisted usually lose their eyes entirely. Their fur becomes pitch black if it was not before and their squeak becomes louder and eerie, it cuts through the flesh and sends shivers down the spine. Bats also often grow an extra set of limbs, forearms they use for grabbing. Because of their nighttime habits and preference to the shadows most bats become creeplings.

Cats are still cats, even if familiars. They quickly become creeplings growing longer and more pointed ears and their paws often become more hand-like. Cat familiars appear to be more subject to the Twisting of their master than other familiars. There are more Twisted cats among the creepling ranks than any other form of animal. So their Twisting, reflecting their master, may simply make them stand out more than other creeplings giving the illusion of greater change. Or perhaps they truly are more subject to their master.

Hawks are fast hunters and fierce birds; this attitude does not change with the Twisting. Hawk familiars spend most of their time flying and circling unless ordered down, as they feel uncomfortable on the ground. Many become unable to walk, losing their legs but retaining their clawed feet. Their bodies lose most of their feathers except over their powerful wings that seem larger and more powerful. They are fidgets, swooping down to strike at chosen trinkets and soaring away with their prize. They are more prone to hunting than other fidgets.

I have seen few owls at the carnival but those I have are best described as flying crawlers. Slow and almost useless on land they hang motionless watching. Their huge eyes

become even larger and even more precise. They become heavier and slower, their heavy wings acting as a thick blanket over them. Most lose the ability to truly fly and instead glide short distances in total silence.

Rats are commonly fidgets but some become creepling. They come in a wide variety of colouring although their fur is usually patchy and often loose. They never look healthy and always have the air of pestilence around them, even if they are as groomed and well cared for. Their teeth enlarge leaving their mouths perpetually open and drooling and their tails become even longer, occasionally able to manipulate objects.

Ravens are unnerving creatures when twisted, becoming shadowy creeplings. Their bodies become even blacker and they flight becomes unnaturally silent. Twisted ravens have the infuriating tendency to learn some human words and phrases that they repeat when it suits them. Familiars are even more adept at this, often perching and cackling to themselves. Ravens develop a fondness for carrion and dead meals preferring the rotting to fresh meat.

The few snakes that followed along with the Carnival became crawlers. Their long bodies grew even longer and smoother. Their bones, if any remained, often became soft and rubbery allowing the serpents even greater flexibility. Their long forked tongues become unnaturally long and dexterous and many serpents grow a second head or tail. Brightly coloured snakes find their hues even more vivid. The Snake Mistress, Silessa, has numerous exotic snakes in her vardos, close to two dozen. Most of these serpents are minimally Twisted and more serpent than

creepling. This does not mean they are free from changes. The teeth of some are so large they always protrude from the reptile's mouth and the brightly coloured diamond-shaped markings on another's back hypnotically shift and flow.

Toads become disgusting creatures with the Twisting. The amphibians become unbelievably warty creatures with a long dangling tongue that lies draped from their mouth. They are often covered in a thick slime that oozes from them leaving a thin coating on everything they touch. I saw one that dragged itself like a slug along the ground and up walls leaving its trail behind it. Thankfully there are few of these in the Carnival. All toads become crawlers.

Weasels are universally fidgets. Their long bodies stretch and lengthen under the Twisting so the middle of their bodies drags on the ground, but they are still quick and fleet of foot. Many grow an extra set of limbs and become a six or eight legged freaks. More than any other fidgets weasels love to hoard and collect small baubles and treasures. They have small hiding places throughout the vardos where they store their ill-gotten wares.

Familiars

Creeplings and other Twisted animals can be chosen as a familiar by wizards and sorcerers who do not already have a familiar or one whose familiar has died. Creepling familiars gain all the special abilities as regular familiars.

Familiar	Special
Creepling	+2 Hide
Fidget	+2 Pick Pockets
Crawler	+2 Fortitude Saves

Spell Casters who already have a familiar do not change their extra ability but the animal is still affected by the Twisting. Its stats remain as they were and do not change to those of a generic creeping.

Random Twisting Effects

Like humans, animals are subject to the powers of the twisting. Any creature that spends a sizable amount of time within the carnival begins to warp and mutate under the twisting. To create twisting effects in an animal, simple roll one D10 and consult the table below.

1) Prehensile Tail: The animal's current tail becomes flexible and able to hold small objects. If the animal does not have a tail it either grows one or another body part becomes flexible instead, such as the tongue or whiskers.

2) Fur: The animal's hair is affected. It has twice the amount of fur or half as much. The Twisting can be uniform or patchy and shaggy in places. The fur may also change in colour or thickness.

3) Bones: The animal's bones are altered. It can have no bones, twice as many, or thicker bones. The bones could also change in shape and/or size. Bones

can fuse leaving a less flexible and quick animal or there may be extra bones giving an unnatural appearance to the animal.

4) Body Fat: The animal is either bloated or skin-and-bones. Only select parts of the body need be affected.

5) Distended Body: The animal's torso is up to twice as long or wide. The opposite can also happen so the body shrinks to half the former size.

6) Claws and Fangs: The animal's claws and fangs are noticeably larger, but make it harder to walk, climb, and eat. Or the claws and teeth are missing entirely.

7) Dexterous Paws: Can pick up and manipulate objects. Paws become longer and more hand like.

8) Limbs: Has an extra pair of limbs or is missing one or two. The limbs may be functional or useless vestigial protrusions. New limbs need not match the old.

9) Skin: Animal can have skin that is either rigidly thick or paper thin and almost transparent. Scales or bright colouring could also be grown. The skin varies from unnaturally smooth to rough and coarse like sandpaper.

10) Combination of two: Roll twice.

Delirious Nocturne

A Ravenloft Adventure

By Dmitri Zorin

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This adventure is intended for 4-6 characters of levels 4-6. A cleric and/or paladin and a rogue are strongly recommended.

Background

The adventure takes place in Armeikos, a small town on the Island of Liffe. Count George Ariari rules the island. He is a haughty and stern noble, known as a just ruler. His only concerns are the taxes and fees he levees to send an income to his suzerain without any delays. The count has but one flaw, an obsession with vampirism. The Count is consumed with finding a cure from vampirism. Indeed, he is so obsessed that he started to prey on innocent people to continue his inhuman experiments.

The tragic circumstance that led to the Count's grizzly obsession began with the crimes of his father. The former Count Modest Artiari contracted the affliction during a romantic affair with a kargat vampiress intent on putting Armeikos under her control. George's mother, Ingrid Artiari, suspecting adultery, confronted her husband on a cold, moonless evening. To her horror the passionate argument awoke the vampiric monster lurking within the man. Unable to control his bloodlust the Count slew his wife, tearing open her throat and draining her of all blood. When his conscience returned, he fled in terror to the mountains. With the

coming of a dawn, he came to terms with the terrible murder he had perpetrated and decided to conceal his heinous act.

After returning to the castle, the Count summoned his servants and played the part of a poor widower, unaware of the fate that befell his good wife. His money and influence bought silence among those who cared to take interest and all soon forgot the incident. All say George.

Alas, George heard his mother's screams of terror that night and, after his father had fled, he entered his parents' room only to discover his mother lying on the blood-covered floor. Having studied in Il-Aluk's University and taking interest in all things bizarre and obscure, George recognized the work of a vampire. Being an enlightened young man and believing in the eminent victory of mind over prejudices and dark secrets of their world, he started the search for the being responsible for his mother's death. Soon, all evidence pointed to his father. Terrified by his discovery, George researched a method to put his father's tortured soul to rest. One shiny day he finally found the beast that took over his father's soul. Catching it asleep in its crypt, he staked the creature. He then hid the body where no one else might find it.

The Count's mysterious disappearance only drew more scandal upon Castle Artiari. Commoners and

peer nobles alike began to suspect that all was not right within its walls. Yet in the months of calm after the Count's vanishing, the citizens of Liffe accepted the occurrences, deducing that the strain of losing his beloved wife drove the Count's away.

Unfortunately, George's sanity was severely shaken by the death of his mother and his father's demise. He brooded for several weeks, decaying from the inside out. Then, when the servants started to entertain the idea of quitting his service altogether, the new Count came to his senses. In a twisted mockery of true noble vows, he swore to search for the cure of the terrible sickness responsible for his losses. His considerable knowledge in surgery and medicine allowed him to start his experiments. Without a delay he acquired an alchemical laboratory from the land of Paridon, as well as experimental surgical devices from Lamordia. George Artiari set to his work, first experimenting on his servants and guards in the depths of his dungeon. George researched the mysterious bodily fluids that sustained human life, the anatomy of the body as well as the effects of experimental concoctions had on human brain.

After a month of his research, not a single servant or guard escaped his surgical knife. Artiari had created an interesting collection of animated bodies, as well as a number of horrible mutants he affectionately named "successes". Enriching his biological knowledge, the Count discovered he needed a steady supply of true vampires to test his drugs on. After meticulous research of the strange occurrences that had happened on the island of late, he found a perfect specimen, an inexperienced vampire. Inattentive and

inaccurate in its feeding methods, the creature was easily discovered. George approached the vampire and offered the child of the night an opportunity it couldn't refuse: a well-defended hideout, an alibi against would-be vampire slayers' accusations and a foolproof plan of feeding.

Savage storms are common enough in the area surrounding Liffe; the shoreline lacks lighthouses and rocky cliffs jutted from every side of the island. Shipwrecks occurred with grizzly frequency. George suggested a fiendish plan to his vampiric cohort; embarking on the ship bound for the Liffe from Nevuchar Springs, the beast would sail about three quarters of the way and then attack the crew at night. Slaughtering or incapacitating the men, the monster would guide the ship towards the shore, scuttling the vessel upon rocks. Then, with the help of Artiari's undead minions, the vampire would carry the bodies through the coastal cave system to the castle's dungeons. In time the victims would rise as vampire spawn, destined to be destroyed by the mad doctor's experiments.

Current Sketch

The Count considers this bargain as a necessity, a literal "deal with the devil". To George, the sole benefit of this arrangement is the steady supply of fresh subjects for his research. He loathes all vampires and will have no second thought about betraying his undying allies should the arrangement fail to suit him. The vampire himself is no fool. He treats his human master with the same distrust.

Through this scheme, the two have already arranged several shipwrecks. This success has made the two very

arrogant, so much so that they are ignorant of the numerous risks they have left unattended. The seclusion and social isolation of the new Artiari Count contrasts sharply with the flamboyant lifestyle of his father. This has led to growing suspicions amongst commoners and nobles alike. Some believe that the Count is ill, while others believe that he is already dead. Furthermore the vampiress Sophia d'Terrieux, who had originally seduced George's father, has grown suspicious with the passing of time. Upon learning of the new heir, she has decided to discretely investigate the matter, sending an agent of hers to check the things out. Perhaps most importantly, the Count and his minion have sorely underestimated the mortals traveling the route from Darkon to Liffe. Sooner or latter a band of adventurers are bound to board a ship to Liffe, and bring George's diabolic plans to a screeching halt.

Nevuchar Springs

The adventure begins in Nevuchar Springs, a small town situated on the east coast of Darkon. Hopefully, the

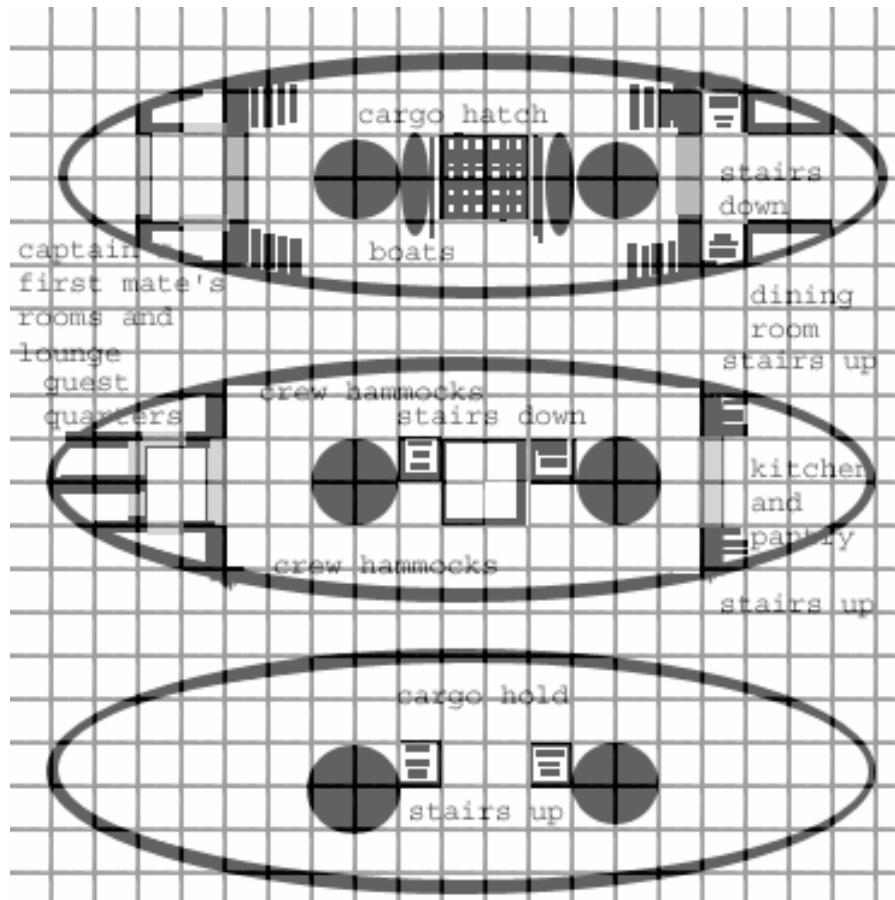
party has some need to attend to at sea, but the following hooks can be used to make them set sail:

As anybody in the port or nearby seedy places can tell, there has been a streak of attacks by a "sea monster" on the fishing boats, larger ships and even remote fishermen steads on the sure. A reward of 500 skulls (darkonese gp) awaits those brave enough to find and slay the beast. This information may also be learnt from taverns, the local militia or the town crier.

The party may be asked to track down a "freak", who ran off the Carnival currently staying on the outskirts of the town and took refuge on a ship bound for Liffe a day before. The ship has since left the harbor, but, oddly enough, another ship is to sail to the same good town Armeikos with a cargo of food, goods and mail.

However they might begin their voyage, the only ship available for hire is "Pheoctyst", a sturdy two-mast vessel. Most of the ships are out at the sea or are being repaired after recent pirate attacks.

Pheoctyst, sailing ship.



Crew (20): Captain Leovon “Sure Eye” Tivalan, LN human male Exp6/Ftr2. First mate Travis “Best Oath” Busurock, LE human male Exp5/Ftr1. Cook Antesy Sevaraul, LN half-elf male Com2/Exp2. 6 LN, LE, N male humans and half-elves Exp3. 8 LN, LE, N male humans and half-elves Com3. 3 LN male humans War2/Exp2.

The ship is may be used as a vehicle to hunt for the “sea monster”, the fare is waved for the party. No cargo is taken and two ballistae are mounted near the first mast, with one to port left and the other to port right. The crew is not encouraged by the prospect of chasing a huge monster, so the mood is gloomy and PCs may hear several not-so-pleasant comments about them and the expedition in general. The captain

understands the necessity of such expedition, but tries to make it clear for the party that he values his men much more than the “complete strangers of doubtful competence”.

Alternately, if the ship may be hired to transport the PCs to Armeikos, then she carries a dozen wooden boxes and a score of barrels in its cargo hold, as well as a sack or two of correspondence. The fee is 15 gp per person. The crewmembers are considerably neutral towards the passengers, neither helpful, nor oppressive. The captain is glad to have somebody new to chat to onboard, so the trip should be described as pleasant, despite rough seas. The voyage takes 3 days, with estimated time of arrival being the dawn of the third day.

Though, as the navigator will confess, any estimated measurements are unreliable in the Nocturnal Sea. Checks for seasickness are optional, but in any given day, any PC who had eaten anything might roll a Fortitude save (DC=10+1 per meal taken that day), with a circumstantial modifier of -1 for every previously successful check and +1 for every previous failure. If a character fails, he or she is nauseated but two successful consecutive checks indicate that the character is healthy once more and no longer suffers from seasickness.

The first disappearance occurs on the 1st night of the voyage. This accident is a reaver's work; an outcast school of four such creatures attack ships and fishermen huts, considering the sea near the Nevuchar Springs harbor their territory. A day after this "reconnaissance" attack the reavers decide to board the ship under the cover of night and slay everyone aboard.

The PCs are most likely to be asleep when the beasts strike. If they are not sleeping or even take turns on watch, the DM should modify the encounter accordingly. Using as much stealth as possible, the reavers first kill the helmsman and lookouts, staying out of sight of the man in the crow's nest. Assume they manage to dispose of the crew on the first deck rather quietly and quickly, so as not to raise the remaining sailors below decks. The DM might wish to play it out, though, rolling Spot and Listen checks for the crow's nest lookout, opposed by reavers' Move Silently and Hide checks. This may result in PCs being awakened by an alarm roused by the lookout. Again, in this case the encounter should be modified appropriately.

In case the alarm hasn't been sounded, the reavers descend on the second deck and start butchering the crew immediately. The ensuing combat awakens the PCs and they, hopefully, join the fight. If the alarm was sounded, then the PCs are ready for combat and reavers meet organized resistance as soon as they descend to the living quarters.

Reavers (4). hp 22 each.
DoDark128.

Tactics: If the monsters meet serious resistance, they prefer to withdraw to live another day. The creatures take as many incapacitated victims with them as possible, rather than flee empty handed. After three of the monsters have been reduced to half their original hit points, the beasts withdraw. They use their *improved grab* ability to carry their victims with them. If the reavers have slain the helmsman, throughout the battle the helm remains unattended. The erratic movements of the ship make it necessary for everyone to make Concentration checks to cast spells (DC= 15+ spell level) as well as Balance checks to stay on foot (DC 15) each round. A character that loses his footing is knocked prone for that round.

The encounter should end with reavers being driven away be it the PCs' battle prowess or the crew's heroic stand. Assume that 2 Commoners and 1 Expert (the helmsman) were killed on the first deck. The ensuing fight should be played out, with captain and first mate joining the fight at the beginning of the 3rd round. The crew uses "total defense" actions until their officers appear, at which time they try to kill, injure or at least drive the abominations back to the sea.

It is likely that several of the crew will be slain. The casualties will make

the captain to announce that the hunt is over, if that is the reason for the voyage. If, however, the ship is transporting the characters, the Captain spurs the run to Armeikos. In any case, he assumes it is safer to enter the Armeikos harbor and replenish their supplies and crew, than turn back and brave the sea in their doubtful state.

Unfortunately, the fight and the fact that the helm was left unattended coupled with the stormy sea makes reaching Armeikos on the third day impossible. For the remaining of the night and most part of the 3rd day, Captain Leovon and his mate verify their position by stars and maps. Eventually they realign the ship to her previous course. They plan to reach Armeikos by the early morning of the 4th Day. Unfortunately, the vampire strikes on the 3rd night. Again, the encounter depends on the party's state during the attack. If they are careful enough to post guards, they may prevent the vampire from starting the slaughter in the sleeping quarters, engaging him when he appears on the deck. Yet, unless they specifically indicate otherwise, the PCs are assumed to be taking a nap when the vampire strikes. Once again, the sounds of combat awaken the party. If the PCs are sleeping, the encounter begins when they awake from the noise. Read the following text:

“You dream of a small, comfortable rural house secluded in a forested glen, living there with your relatives and loved ones away from the tumult of the big world. The sun sets behind the conifer trees as you watch it through the window from the warm bedroom. Your lids get weaker ...weaker – and you find yourself falling asleep.”

“Not long after, cries of fear and anguish coming from the other rooms in

the house awaken you: bestial roars and sickly sounds of bones being crushed reach your ears. Rushing towards the door, you push it open – and stop cold in your feet, peering at the hairy breast of a huge, fur-covered beast with loosely ursine features – as if a man and a bear were merged in one body, locked in a terrible process of some unimaginable transformation.”

“At this moment, you awaken for the second time. With chilling fear rising inside, you notice that the sounds of slaughter haven't faded away with your dream – they are still coming from behind the closed doors of your quarters!”

The dream above assumes the character has some relatives dear to him/her alive, the idea is to remind the PCs of someone they loved and held dear sometime during their lives, never mind the time period.

When they rush into the sleeping quarters, they encounter a terrible scene; the remaining crew is scattered throughout the second deck, some of them cowering in terror while others trying to organize resistance. Many of them lie on the floor, their necks snapped by the monster raging at the survivors of his attack in the center of the room.

The scene the PCs see when they burst through the doors should be described appropriately. Stress the cries of anguish ringing in ears, the bodies lying in unnatural positions on the floor, the terror in their lifeless eyes, and the blood dripping from the monster's claws. The beast obviously takes delight in the carnage; his blood-covered lips are frozen in a cruel wicked grin. A horror check against a DC 15 and a fear check

DC 12 might be appropriate, though subject to DM's discretion.

Santori Maino, LE human male vampire. Hp 60.

The ensuing fight is as chaotic as possibly, with vampire's fists bashing the walls, doors, oil lamps and ladders whenever the beast misses. It is obvious that the creature doesn't take notice of the damage it inflicts on the ship. The beast concentrates on the crew at first, having already slain the unfortunates above and herded the rest below decks. The only escape route is through the kitchen, but the doors to the kitchen are behind the vampire.

During the combat, no sooner than after 6 rounds, a supporting beam dislodges and pins the vampire in its fall. At this time the ship is swiftly moving to her doom, carried at full speed towards the rocky shore of Liffe island. The shock of the impact throws boxes and barrels blocking the hatches off their places and everyone alive and still standing must make a balance check DC 15 (uneven angled floor) with a -4 circumstance penalty due to the impact. On a failed check, a character loses his footing and falls prone.

The shipwreck occurs at about 5 a.m. with the time of sunrise adjusted by the DM. Bear in mind that it's better for the vampire to free himself from the wreckage and flee before sunrise. The creature is disoriented for sometime, but gets its bearings in 4-5 rounds. If the party is still present, it will try to free itself from the beam (strength check DC 15) and continue the fight. In the case that it is badly wounded (has lost more than half its HP) or the PCs press their attack, the vampire turns into mist and flees. The same happens if the beast finds no one alive on the ship. Note the number of crew survivors, as it may

come handy later in the adventure. The PCs may wish to help any of the survivors leave the ship (which is encouraged and should be awarded by a suitable XP award – 50 xp per character per level), or they may flee for their lives – in any case, the closest town (a couple hours' walk due north-east) is Armeikos.

Armeikos

Armeikos. Pop.3000. A relatively large coastal town, Armeikos is a major trade associate of Nevuchar Springs. The folk are mostly fishermen, sailors or dockers; people whose life depends on the sea this way or another. The town stands on the shores of river Hordum, where it flows into the Nocturnal Sea, in the Sound of Liffe. Hordum Bay is a perfect natural stopping point, later improved by the residents of the city. The port sports piers and warehouses to facilitate the thriving shipping industry. Armeikos is not a walled city; the lack of land-bound enemies and the high prices of fortifications discourage mayor from building walls. The town has a standing militia force of 50 militiamen, whose duties include patrolling the town and its outskirts as well as investigating any crimes committed in the town. The town is divided up amongst eleven distinct areas. The edge of the town is made up of the outlying farms. The few crops raised here add to the rations of the citizens. One the edge of the city is the wealthy district, the corner of the town where wealthy merchants and lesser gentry live. Several expensive shops and restaurants are situated in the wealthy district.

The merchant district is the home to the merchants and master smiths of the city. Most shops in Armeikos are situated in this district, as well as taverns and inns. The marketplace is a huge

open-air plaza, full of merchants' tents and wagons. Throughout the day hundreds of people pass through the market, going about their business. Food and daily goods are bought here. Anything from the Players Handbook may be bought here, except weapons, armor, transport and special items. The poor district hugs the piers. Dockers, sailors and their families populate this part of the town. It is a simple matter to rent a sleeping corner in almost any house, as most of the residents here are in need of a hard coin. The prices average 5cp-1sp per person. The conditions are humble at best; most sleeping quarters consist of a bench or a piece of cloth to sleep on, with fleas for free. Rooms include some meals, consisting of simple beverages with a carrot or two and a couple of fish fins called "soup". Overpopulated and filthy, the district suffers from frequent fires and plague outbreaks.

The harbor district is full of taverns, inns and feast halls. This section of the city is specialized to facilitate the rest and recuperation of sailors. Naturally, cutthroats, thieves, assassins and rouges of all kinds call this place home and comprise the most part of the district's residents. All in all, it is a dangerous place for an unprepared to walk in, as the heroes are most likely to attract the attention of thugs and thieves by their flamboyant style and haughty behavior. Of course, if PCs manage to keep low profile, they may attract no attention at all. Any kind of information, rumor, drug or other illegal stuff can be bought here, for a price.

Flanking the Market are the many municipal buildings that house the city's administrators. Custom service, apothecaries, the mayor's office and many other government offices are

situated in the district. To the edge of the city is the local institution of learning, known simply as the College. This institution offers education in general sciences to those who are willing to pay. However, if the DM decides, this place might also be the home of one or several magicians, willing to tutor in arcane, for a price.

To one corner of the city are the Barrens. The plain in the southwestern part of the town is completely infertile. The gray soil supports nothing, say the few weeds that hold the Barrens down to the earth. To one side of the Merchant district is the Parklands. A favorite place for a walk among the wealthier part of the populace, the Park sports secluded shadowed alleys, terraces with the view of a bay, benches and anything a tired person in the middle of a busy town might wish for. Finally, the Mayor residence stands on the border between the wealthy district and the farmlands. Behind the walls of the estate stands a two-storied mansion decorated with statues and marble columns as well as a rich, vivid garden.

The following rumors can be gleaned from the locals:

1) "The Count is seriously ill and the civic government is exploiting his weakness. As a result the streets are getting dirtier and the city is more dangerous." This rumor is mostly false. The mayor and his cronies are convenient scapegoats.

2) "The majority of the townsfolk cower in the Poor District, yet Artiari's servants live in splendor and excess. The Count is surely dead, for he has not been seen for 2 months already. Certainly his servants have disposed of the poor young man's body and now carouse in the castle." This rumor is also false. The

servants were the first to suffer at the hands of young Count and have not been seen or heard from for months.

3) “The castle was cursed by traveling gypsies. Before the death of the Countess, a vistani woman once attended to the castle. This rumor is false.

The PCs are free to explore the town as they see fit, with DM providing as many or as few encounters as suit his/her campaign. The list of keyed encounters is given below:

Collections for Charity

Sometime during the PCs’ walk in the Harbor District (or at night in any other district, if players didn’t visit the harbor), a group of local thugs decides to alleviate their purses. Two of the bandits emerge from the shadows in front of the party, while four more closing in from behind. This encounter assumes that the party is made up of four characters. The total number of thugs should be two greater than the size of the party.

Thugs (varies): NE human male War3, HP 20.

The bandits want to take everything valuable, even the clothing off of the character’s backs. If enough ruckus is raised the militia arrives in 10 rounds. However, someone of more interest arrives even earlier.

In two rounds Dariana, Sophia d’Terrieux’s agent, joins the fight on the side of the party. She poses as an unwitting traveling bard, who happened to stumble on the fight in the streets and decided to spoil the thugs’ evening by helping the heroes. She claims to hail from Moondale, a town father north on this island. If pressed, she recounts that wanderlust called her to travel to the south in hopes of finding an adventure worthy of song or a poem.

Dariana. NE human female Rog 5/Brd1. hp 25.

Dariana uses her poisoned rapier and tries to get into a sneak attack position if possible.

She takes careful note of the party’s tactics during the fight, since she doesn’t know whether they’ll be friends or foes. The DM should make appropriate notes of the PCs’ tactic, for Dariana may use this knowledge to her advantage later, when and if she comes to blows with the party. If Dariana judges the party worthy to assist her she asks them to help her explore the Count’s estate. Otherwise she prefers to explore the castle on her own.

An Offer you can’t refuse

If Dariana decides the party is up to the task, she suggests that they move to a more hospitable place where they can discuss an interesting offer. A small inn named “The Weeded Sailor” in the Harbor District is the place Dariana chooses.

The DM should read or paraphrase the following:

“Like I was saying, I was traveling southwards from the Moondale in search of adventure. Several days ago I entered the town, having found nothing of interest to the north. However, I’ve stumbled upon an interesting rumor here in Armeikos. It seems that the local ruler, Count Artiari, has been behaving strange of late. People believe him either to be sick or cursed or even worse. Not very long ago some traveling folk accused him of being a vampire of all things. They ventured into the castle to slay him, but never returned. Now I know I may be asking too much of you,

but I thought we could “pool our forces” and discover the truth behind the rumors. We might even help ourselves to the Count’s treasures.”

Dariana is trying to play an innocent, ambitious and somewhat naïve young traveling bard. She expects the PCs to take the leading role, while she manipulates them into doing her bidding. If the PCs are reluctant to accept her offer, Dariana offers to pay them for their help. This payment could be any sum of gold or any magical item; there is no limit to what she might promise since Dariana has no intention of paying. If this second offer is refused, Dariana gives up. She shadows them for a day or two to learn their intents and then investigates on her own. Should the players accept, Dariana suggests that they enter the castle with the coming of the next dawn.

The Roots of Evil

It is possible that the PCs decide to return to the shipwreck sometime during their stay on the island. If this happens after their venture into the castle, the site is deserted. If they explore the site prior to their journey to the castle, they are in for a surprise.

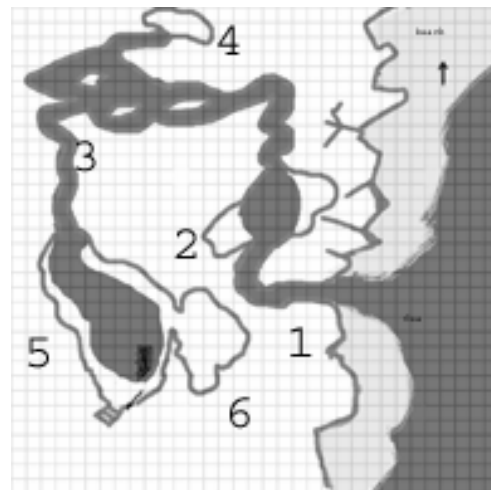
The Pheoctyst was thrown on the rocky beach several miles to the southwest of Armeikos. She shifts and moves with the waves, caught between two large rocks 20 feet from the shore. As the descent into the sea is relatively smooth here, it is possible to get to her hull by wading in the water. This feat requires Strength check against a DC 15 to fight the waves and strong current.

The ship is completely empty of any bodies, though the signs of battle and blood marks are still easily seen. If

the vampire was left pinned under the beam the beam lies broken, thrown off to the nearby wall. Two lacedons are under the standing orders from their master to attack and kill anyone who attempts to explore the site. They hide under the weeded ship hulk when the heroes arrive, then maneuver themselves between the PCs and the town. Otherwise, they just swim through the shallow water, attempting to attack any of the PC standing near the water. A fear check DC 12 inspired by this sight might be appropriate.

Lacedons (2). hp 13 each. *MM97*.

If the shore is inspected for tracks, a successful wilderness lore check against a DC 17, modified by +1 per day between the shipwreck and the PCs’ return to the site, shows that a group of about nine creatures made several trips between the shipwreck and the rocks several hundred yards away. There is a cave entrance that leads to a complex with access to the lower dungeons of the castle. Unless otherwise noted, the caves have no light sources and the ceiling in caves and tunnels is 10-11 feet high over the water.



1. Cave entrance: Nestled between two rocks, this cave’s ceiling stands

about 6 feet over the water. There is almost no current in the cave, the water within ebbs and flows with the tide.

2. The ceiling in this cave rises to 15 feet. Two torches are secured in wall sconces on both sidewalls of the cave. The torches are *everburning*. They provide enough light to find the correct path from area 3. Once the PCs enter the cave they may attempt a Spot Check against a DC 20 to notice two patches of bloodroot hanging from the ceiling of the cave. As the tunnel is used primarily by the undead, the plant naturally avoids attacking these creatures. Living PCs however, will not be so fortunate.

Bloodroots (2). hp 22 each.
DoDark113.

3. One of the heroes from the previous adventuring party that braved the castle managed to flee as far as cave 5 of this level, when Santori Maino caught up with him. His corpse was discarded into the black waters of the cave. Now an aquatic remnant, the fallen hero manifests somewhere in these tunnels when first the PCs move through them. His remains lie at the bottom of cave 5. If they are given a descent burial in a sanctified ground he is put to rest and the PCs may be awarded experience as if they defeated the creature.

Aquatic Remnant. hp 19.
DoDark130.

4. This lightless cavern is the lair of two lacedons. The ceiling is 20 feet high.

Lacedons (2). hp 13 each. *MM97.*

5. This large cavern is 30 feet high, lighted with four more *everburning torches*. A pier with a boat tied to it can be seen at the far end of the cave, as well as a gaping, maw-like stairway leading somewhere upwards (northern staircase

on the lower dungeons level). To the left stands another cave. This cave is dry, although the details are hard to distinguish because of the near-total darkness inside. A small colony of skeletal bats lairs here. The bats have orders to attack any living being approaching without the undead escort. The bats may be seen hanging there, if an appropriate Spot check (DC 15) succeeds. If the bats attack, they make enough noise during their attack to awaken the “storage overseer” in the next cave. Blighter, Artiari’s alchemical homunculus familiar, usually sleeps in this remote cave. He has instructions to instantly fly to his master and notify him of the intrusion. However, the creature might prefer to try to take care of the problem on his own. See his tactics in the description of area 6.

Skeletal Bats (13). hp 6 each.
DoDark24.

6. This dry cave is a “back-up” storage facility of the castle. The contents of the cave may include Santori’s extra coffin, several boxes with alchemical and surgical equipment, and waterproofed copies of Artiari’s journal. Of particular interest to the party may be a small chest with a 1000 SP and 200 gp, several flasks of alchemist fire and acid, as well as 2 *potions of cure serious wounds* (caster level 7).

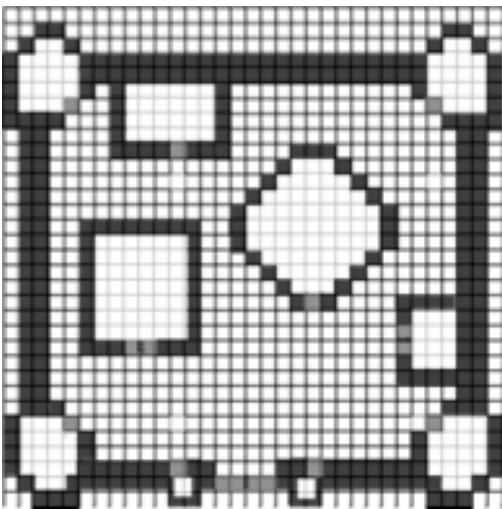
Blighter. hp 11.

In two rounds after the combat in area 5 begins, the lazy homunculus awakens and turns his attention to the ruckus outside. He may attempt to bite a spell caster with his poisoned fangs, but will retreat after suffering a single point of damage. If driven off, Blighter decides it is due time to warn his master of the intruders.

The Castle



Artiari's residence, known among the locals as simply "The Castle" oversees the town and bay from its stony perch atop the nearby rocks. The castle is guarded by stonewall, several curtain turrets and a donjon, the main tower where the count himself and his servants live. The only road connecting Armeikos with the rest of the Island of Liffe passes below the walls of the castle. The plan of the castle is given below. The scale on the overall castle map is 1 square = 10 feet.



The two small turrets flanking the gates are now empty, with only cold wind and a dozen of rodents venturing inside. The towers once served as barracks for the small contingent of count's troops but as George's new servants need no living quarters, the four towers are deserted as well. The other buildings of note from the map include a chapel, stables and a storage facility, where the most part of the expendable goods such as food, clothes and tools are kept.

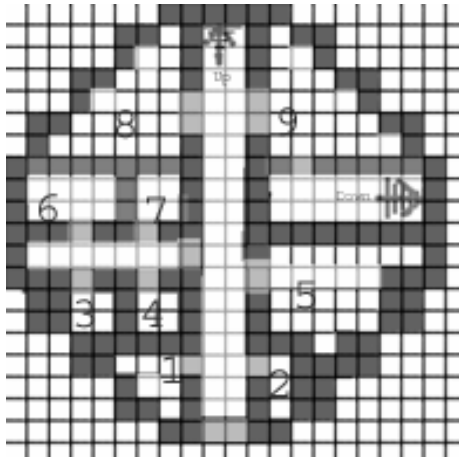
The circular building on the map is the donjon. The inner details of the buildings are left for the DMs to flesh out, though the chapel should be described as deserted and forlorn as possible. Aside from the Donjon, there is nothing of consequence on the ground floor. If the DM feels it necessary packs of rats, dire rats, ghouls or broken-ones can inhabit the ground floor buildings

The gates to the castle proper stand open, a 5-foot wide crack between them. During the day few of the castle's inhabitants care to lookout for the visitors, much less guard the outer gates. At night, however, wolves and bats from the surrounding countryside provide an early warning to Santori, while his undead minions take careful watch around the castle. If the PCs arrive in the day they meet no resistance until they enter the donjon.

Unless noted otherwise, the rooms' and corridors' height is 15 feet, a torch is secured in a wall sconce every 10 feet to provide enough illumination. The scale is 1 square = 5 feet. The location and number of windows is left for the DM to decide, as well as whether or not the light enters the tower. The present inhabitants can surely do without the daylight, so they may or may not have sealed all of the windows. The Donjon

is well maintained since the servants still carry out their chores. Three aboveground levels of the donjon are rank 1 sinkholes of evil, while both dungeons levels are rank 2 sinkholes of evil.

Donjon level 1



Once the party enters this area they are met by the broken-one Majordomo, who tries to escort them into a guest chamber. The servants of the Count make an attempt to avoid combat, though if the players incite violence they are more than willing to respond in kind.

1. Antechamber: In the past, visitors to the Castle were expected to leave their outdoor clothes and weapons here. Several rows of hooks as well as three shelves for bulky items are the only features of the room.

2. Storage/Pantry: Goods of more immediate and everyday use are stored here for the cook's convenience.

3. Servants' quarters. Once a home to common men and women, these quarters are now a lair of broken ones. The unfortunate souls still linger in their rooms by night and attend their day-to-day business by day.

Broken One: hp 25. *DoDark29*.

Note: The exact capabilities and powers of the broken ones are left for the DM to decide. The Dark Powers meddled with George's creations, granting each of his subjects a minor trait. These traits may be **Damage Reduction**, **Blood Frenzy** or some other Broken One power.

4. As 3.

Broken One. hp 25. *DoDark29*.

5. Kitchen: This room features a large fireplace, dozen of shelves and an improvised dumb-waiter. A broken one cook is in this room during the day.

6. Majordomo's room: A small bell is secured on a hook on this cave's dark ceiling. A wire runs from this bell to the one in D6 and the one in C6. When the bell in any of these rooms is rung, the bells in the other rooms ring too. It takes creatures on this level about two minutes to organize, gather up and reach the laboratory. Another victim of Count's experiments, this once proud dignified man had served George's family for decades. His tasks now include a mockery of his previous ones, as well as meeting and guiding unexpected guests to the antechamber and then to the guest room (8). He has instructions to behave as politely as possible and not to react to any of the PCs' actions, unless they threaten the castle's well being. If this is the case, majordomo retreats to call forth other servants in the building, then heads to where the George abides at the time. He won't allow any obvious weapons to be taken however, it's still possible for sneaky PCs to hide weapons or retrieve them soon after.

Broken One. hp 25. *DoDark29*.

7. As 3.

Broken One. hp 25. *DoDark29*.

8. Guest room: Draped in blue-green colors of Artiani device, the room

has two arrow slit windows, a table, several cushioned chairs and a sofa in the corner. The visitors are expected to wait for their meeting with Count in this room. Ten minutes after their arrival, the count arrives to greet his guests. Refer to “The Face of Evil” entry.

9. Hunting hall: The old Count was a skillful hunter who enjoyed showing his trophies to his guests. Now the hall is neglected, it is the only dusty room in the castle. No ghosts or spirits abide here and none of the current inhabitants ever enter the room. The natural shadows and grisly trophies invoke a sense of uneasiness.

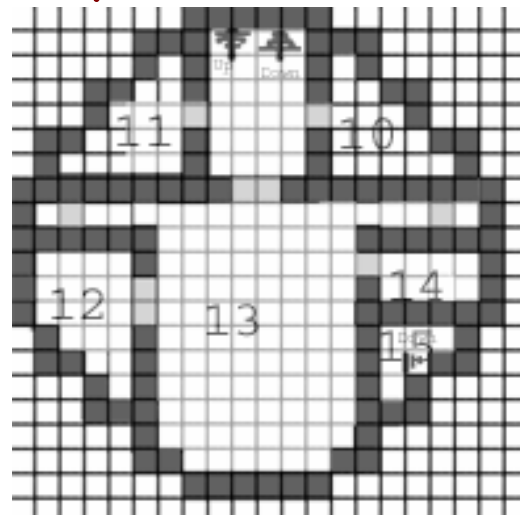
If the PCs enter this room, read the following:

The creaking door opens and reveals a dark room, with not as much as a sliver of light penetrating the gloom. As you enter, you can hear the floorboards creak beneath your feet. You can see the dust swirl and dance, flowing slowly in the light coming from the corridor. The smell of old tanned leather permeates your nostrils. Deep shadows cover the corners and walls of the room, as if the night itself has covered the room. Some outside noise draws your attention from the inspection of the room. It sounds like the scraping of claws on the stone floor. A shadow seems to dart to the corner. Staring there, you get a sickening feeling that you’re being watched. Several feet higher you notice two pinpoints of yellow light staring back at you. Now you see more clearly through the gloom. Beasts of all kinds and sizes surround you on all sides. In your moment of terror, time stops. A bear is posed to strike you with its paw, his maw open wide; Canine creatures soundlessly

howl; feline forms crouch low, ready to pounce on you. A huge monstrous creature looms over you, its eyes glistening in the light.

This is mostly a trick of the PCs’ imagination. If the DM deems the scene played itself out correctly a fear check might be appropriate. The DC of such a check is 8, as it is only a mild confusion at best. However if a member of the party is particularly fearful of animals or lycanthropes, the DC can be raised as high as 15.

Donjon level 2



10. Ingrid’s maid lives here. Now a broken one, the unfortunate creature mills around the keep without any aim or purpose. At night, she is sure to be found in the room, while at day she can be encountered anywhere in the castle.

Broken One. hp 25. *DoDark29.*

11. Modest’s valet lives here. The mutant serves George Artiari. At night he sleeps in his room, while at day he is more likely to be beside his master, attending to the Count’s needs.

Broken One. hp 25. *DoDark29.*

12. Drawing room: In the past the Count and his guests used this room to enjoy conversation, music, games of chance, tobacco and other finer things. The room possesses all the necessary commodities to entertain visitors.

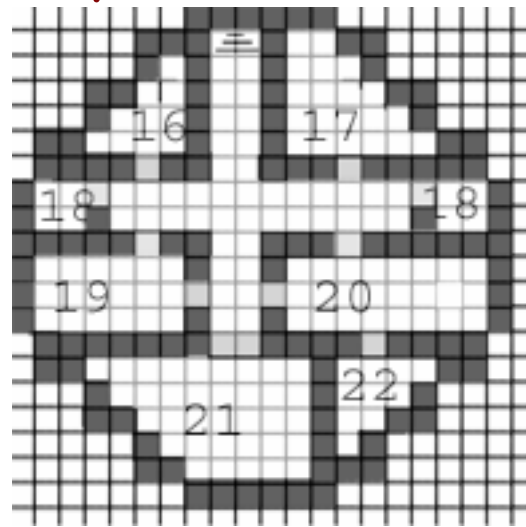
13. Dining hall: A large, 10-foot wide table of polished black wood dominates the room. Plate mail suits line the walls, interspersed with tapestries and weapon displays. A 15-foot diameter candelabra, suspended on sturdy chains under the ceiling, provides enough light to chase the shadows off to the corners. Even still, it's rather gloomy in the hall even with all the candles lit. George and his living accomplices still dine in here every evening.

14. Count's study: Once Modest Artiari's study, this room is now filled with literature of all kind. Within remain the former Count's records, the useless literature left from the Countess Ingrid, and the diaries of George's years as a student of Il-Aluk University. Books of note might include some of the Books of Ezra, as well as works on the culture and history of Darkon. An atlas of the Nocturnal Sea may be included. A candelabra on the desk could be turned 90-degree clockwise to open a secret door (Search DC 20, no lock, hp20, hardness 8) in the southern wall leading to room 15.

15. A secret room with a staircase leading to the first dungeon level room D3, this room is empty save for a web-filled corners, dust on the floor and several tiny spiders eager to bite an explorer or two.

Tiny Monstrous Spiders (1 per PC). hp 2 each. *MM209*.

Donjon level 3



16. Visitors Bedroom: Visitors to the castle who wished to stay overnight were put in this room. It has an oaken bed covered with silken sheets, a table, two chairs, and a dressing screen. The room also features several tapestries and a privy tucked away behind a screen.

17. As 16.

18. Sentry posts: Now unoccupied, these posts were meant to house guards in case of a siege.

19. George's room: The new Count of Armeikos can be found here at night. He is never here during the day, for he spends all his time in the laboratory and study in the dungeon. The room is rather ascetic, including a bed, a table, a couple of chairs, bookcases, wardrobe, and a few tapestries.

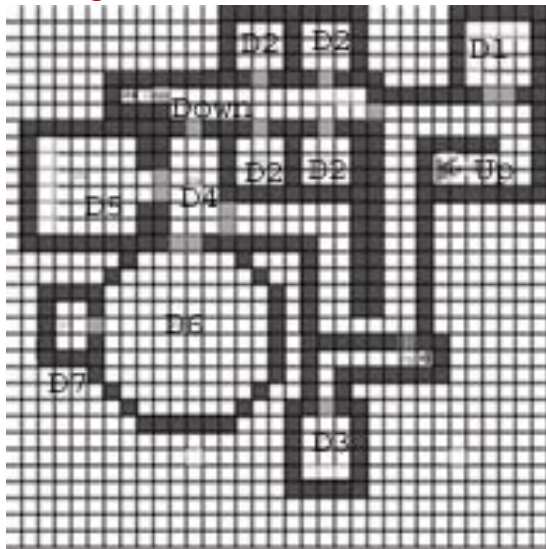
20. Countess' Room: Countess Ingrid's room stands deserted, though neither dusty nor untidy. The room is furnished similar to George's room, but also includes cushioned chairs, a table and a mahogany box of the late Countess's jewels.

21. Count Modest's room: Tapestries of battle and hunting scenes

adorn the walls of the room. A table of black wood stands in the southern wall of the room, with a simple yet elegant chair adjacent to it. In any other respect the room is identical with George's.

22. Countess' boudoir: As the name implies, this was the Countess' private room. The room is tidied regularly, but was not used since Countess' death.

Dungeon level 1



D1. Once a guardroom, this chamber houses 2 broken ones. A table and four chairs are the only furnishings of the room. A pair of burning torches is held in the wall sconces.

Broken Ones (2). hp 25.
DoDark29.

D2. Cell. Each cell has enough space to hold up to four prisoners. Any of the sailors from Pheoctyst that were alive when the chip hit the rocks are kept in these cells. Each day one person is taken away, subjected to the Count's "experiments" and eventually transformed into Broken One.

D3. Modest's Crypt. This room once functioned as a well for the

castle, but was transformed into a lair by Count Modest after his ascendancy to undeath. A wooden coffin stands close to the south wall, partially concealed by the well. Otherwise, the room is empty. Santori thought it extremely humorous that after a minor quarrel with George on some insignificant issue, he played a prank of sorts by placing a weapon of no small power (his *+1 holy bastard sword*) into the Modest's coffin. Not only did the holy weapon suffer from the intimate contact with the residual evil lingering in the crypt, but George was also denied the weapon. Part of the wall in the corridor to the north is in actuality an illusionary wall (Will save DC 20 to disbelieve if counteracted with) hiding the section of the dungeon from the unwary. The only other way to get into the crypt is through room 14 on donjon's second level.

D4. The hall is lit with four torches. If the PCs haven't joined with Dariana before, she is lurking in the shadows of this room when the PCs enter. Once again she offers to join their forces. But if her offer is not accepted she will wait and watch the party's progress from the safety of shadows.

D5. George's study: Books on anatomy and George's experimental notes can be found in this room. A table stands near the western wall with a simple wooden chair next to it. A lamp and a couple of aroma candles provide enough illumination to read and write at the table. As the Count's valet regularly tidies in the room, the study is always clean. The Count's personal valet, a broken one, can be found here at day.

D6. Laboratory: A large surgical table dominates this room. Along the walls run several shelves, each filled with strange potions, flasks, ointments and other scientific

equipment. One entire wall of the room is lost behind a strange-looking contraption resembling a huge vat with numerous glass tubes and wires attached. A bell hangs to the left from the northern door. Notable instrument stored within the room include a plague mask, a lightning box, a chirurgery kit, several bottles of leeches, a sanguine pump, and straightjackets. Amongst the items to be found on the shelves are several dozen syringes, 3 doses of anesthetic, 2 doses of ether, 3 doses of night drops, 2 doses of pungent powder and 1 dose of smelling salts, 1 dose of a poison similar to drow sleep poison, as well as 2 *potions of cure light wounds*, *potion of alter self*, *potion of spider climb*, *potion of dark vision*, *potion of endurance*, *potion of gaseous form*, 1 dose of *dust of illusion* and *keoghtom's ointment*.

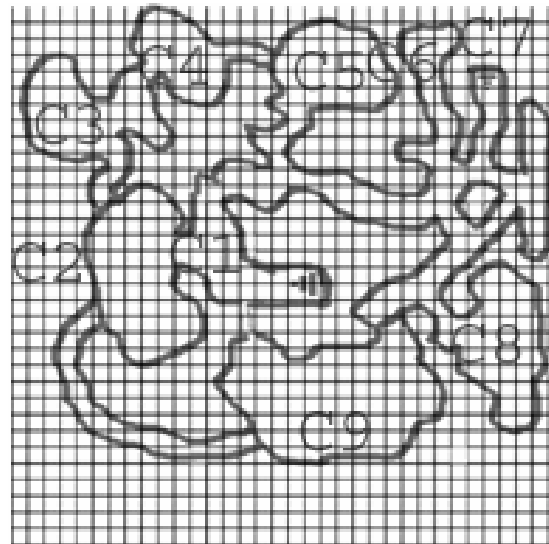
This list is subject to the DM's discretion. At day, George can be encountered here provided he is not alerted to the PCs' presence in his castle. He spends each day working tirelessly and futilely on the ever-evading formula. At present, he is investigating the creation of an alchemical child, in the hopes that it will shed some light on the nature of life. Sadly, each attempt to create life has met with disaster. His only success thus far is a healthy, albeit apathetic, alchemical homunculus.

D7. Sleeping room: Once a storage room, this chamber now contains only an old cushioned sofa. George uses the seat when he is too tired to climb to his room. Garlic is everywhere in the room as George is somewhat terrified by a thought that his ally could sneak on him unawares.

Dungeon level 2

There are no light sources on this level, so PC will have to provide an

illumination of their own, if, indeed, they need any. The ceiling is 10 feet high on average on this level. Due to the proximity to sea, any Listen checks are made with -2 circumstance penalties because of the background noise.



C1. A small bell is secured on a hook on this cave's dark ceiling. A wire runs from this bell to the one in D6 and the one in 6. When the bell in any of these rooms is rung, the bells in the other rooms ring as well. If anything unforeseen happens in those areas of the castle, the Count's minions on this level will know immediately. The sound can be heard throughout the entire level, even over the background noise of a sea. It takes Santori Maino about 5 rounds to reach the laboratory, while the other creatures on the level reach area D6 in one minute.

C2. Corpse disposal cave: A horrid stench permeates the air of the cave, its source being a pile of corpses in the southern corner. One dozen bodies and the body parts of 10 more unfortunates are piled here for ghouls to feed upon. The sight alone is cause for a

Horror check (DC 20). Among the bodies are the remnants of the adventuring party that has entered the castle several days before the PCs' arrival.

There are the remains of the second party fighter (the first lies at the bottom of area 5 on the Sea Cave level – see “Roots of Evil” entry), his *ring of protection +1*, silvered long sword and *+1 short sword* still with him. With him is the party rogue whose corpse holds a masterwork light crossbow and masterwork thieves' tools, and the party wizardress, who holds a spell book and *bracers of armor +2*. Scattered in the pile are 50 gp, 100 SP and 600 cp total. Note that rummaging through the dead person's belongings is a cause for a minor powers check.

At any given time, 4 ghouls and 1 ghast are present in the room, filling their belly or wandering aimlessly around the pile. These are part former soldiers, part count's “recent acquisitions”.

Ghouls(4). hp 13 each. *MM97*.

Ghast. hp 26. *MM97*.

C3. The cave is hidden behind a secret door (Search DC 20) and provides a secondary hideout for Santori in case his lair in C9 will be destroyed. There is nothing of interest or value in the room, except for the bloodroot protruding through the ceiling just above the coffin. Santori sees it as a useful ally capable of disposing of small inconveniences, so he doesn't take steps to eradicate the plant.

Bloodroot. hp 22. *DoDark113*.

C4. The cave is connected with the main tunnels via a secret door (Search DC 20) and is absolutely empty save for a small colony of skeletal bats.

Skeletal Bats (5). hp 6 each. *DoDark24*.

C5. There is nothing of interest in this cave.

C6. This is home for yet another patch of a bloodroot.

Bloodroot. hp 22. *DoDark113*.

C7. This small cave is where most of the ghouls prefer to spend their time. There are 6 ghouls and 2 ghasts at any given time. The floor is littered with bits of meat and bones, as the creatures often take their meal from C2 with them here.

Ghouls(6). hp 13 each. *MM97*.

Ghast(2). hp 26. *MM97*.

C8. Those victims not deemed worthy subjects for experimentation and not drained by Santori immediately after their capture are imprisoned in this lightless cave. Santori regularly feeds upon the prisoners in this cave. The vampire uses shallow feeding to drain each of his “cattle” of some small amount of blood, so that the prisoner is kept alive as long as possible.

All of the undead on this level are under Santori's explicit orders not to hurt any of the prisoners, at least, not to inflict mortal wounds. There are 3 men; one woman and two children on the day the PCs first enter the castle. All are Com1, hp 4 each, their legs bound with ropes tied to the hooks in the far wall, hands tied behind their back. If the party manages to save them and guide back to safety the DM should award the PCs with xp as if they've vanquished a CR 3 monster. If only a fraction of the group is saved – reduce the xp award accordingly.

C9. Santori Maino makes his lair in this cave. The eastern entrance to the cave is hidden behind a secret door (Search check DC 20), while the western is in reality a small, 1-foot diameter, chute in the wall used by the vampire in

gaseous form. Both of these entrances are protected with a trap. Once triggered, the trap releases a hail of needles (*DMG115*), coated with black adder venom (*DMG80*), shot from the wall nearby. The southwestern entrance is hidden by a secret door (Search DC 20) and leads to yet another escape route (area C10), which connects C9 and C3. The coffin rests at the southern wall of the cave. A trap guards the coffin lid from would-be vampire slayers. This trap releases poison gas (*DMG115*), differing from most such traps in that it uses insanity mist poison (*DMG80*). The vampire Santori can be found sleeping in the coffin by day, at night he goes about his business around the castle.

C10. Secret tunnel: Both secret doors leading to the tunnel can only be found with a successful Search check made against a DC of 20. The tunnel itself has two traps made of pressure plates that crush small vials holding toxic poison (Poison gas trap *DMG115* with burnt othur fumes *DMG80*). As a vampire in gaseous form is not likely to activate pressure plates, Santori considers the traps extremely fitting for the task of disabling any pursuers.

The Face of Evil

Sometime during the adventure, the PCs are bound to meet with Count George Artiari for the first time. Read the following text:

You see a lean man of average height before you, his eyes red and swollen from restless nights, no doubt. His skin is pale white, while his cheeks are covered by some feverish redness. A strange ... eagerness plays in the

corners of his eyes as the man surveys your group with a smile, his scarlet tongue showing for a moment between his teeth to lick the lips.

Assuming that the encounter begins without any threats of violence on the PCs' part, the Count plays the part of a pleasant host. He asks the PCs to accompany him to the guest room (if the meeting doesn't happen in there already), even asking the party to stay for a meal. He tries to chat with the PCs in a friendly and amiable manner, but does not speak of his experiments or comment upon any of the bizarre rumors about the castle or himself.

The PCs may glean the fact that he is engaged in some important research, however. With a successful Sense Motive check (DC 15) they may even notice that Count is noticeably nervous about his guests. If asked about his state, the Count replies that he is rather tired because of his work and could use some hours for sleep. Furthermore, he asks the PCs to pay him another visit soon, when he'll be "in a more fitting form".

The truth is count casts his *charm person* spell on a PC sometime before, during or after the initial encounter. He masterfully weaves the spell and gestures of the formula in the discussion so that not to arouse any suspicions. It may be prudent to make the PC roll the save before they encounter the Count so as to avert any guesses of the cause of the save. The charmed person will try his best to return to the castle as soon as possible or even propose that the party spend the night in there. The consequences of such a decision are terrible. In the middle of the night Santori, his ghouls and a force of broken ones will try to subdue and capture the

PCs. If they succeed, the party will either be used as experimental subjects or cattle for the vampire.

If the break-in fails

There is the possibility that the PCs will fail in their attempt of exploring the castle or that they are captured and imprisoned in the dungeons under the castle. If this is the case, the chronology of events is as follows:

1st Night: The PCs are examined and sorted out. Sick and injured characters are given over to the undead minions, while relatively healthy and strong characters are locked in the cells on the first dungeon level (area D2). Dying characters (-1 and below) are drained of all blood this night. The others are left under Santori's custody and are secured in C8.

2nd Night: The first subject is taken into the laboratory. Preliminary tests are conducted, including an application of the lightning box, herbal solutions, night drops, pungent powder and smelling salts. The "cattle" in C8 are fed upon. The sight of feeding is a cause for a Horror save DC 20. The feeding continues on any subsequent night, without any further violation, so it may be easier for the PCs in this cave to escape (Strength check DC 20 tear the bonds, Escape Artist 30).

3rd Night: If there are any "untested" subjects left, they undergo the same tests as at the one on the previous night.

4th Night: During this night and any subsequent night thereafter, one of the PCs is drained of all blood, so as to rise as a vampire or vampire spawn.

5th Night: During this night and any subsequent night thereafter, one of the PC subjects (previously made a vampire spawn) is transformed into a

broken one via a horrible pain inflicting, conscience-crushing process of applying the strong toxins of George's devising.

It is possible that the PCs may withdraw from the castle after a heavy fight only to regroup and return there later. George is no fool, and certainly understands the implications of letting an unchecked band of adventurers roam the countryside. In a day and night he prepares to flee. He packs as much of his equipment as can be moved, disposes of all of his prisoners, and secures passage on a ship bound for anywhere off of Liffe island. The entire evacuation requires only 48 hours. The Count uses his underground cave complex to leave the isle in the early morning of the third day. His servants and undead are left behind to provide the appearance that nothing has changed.

NPCs

George Artiari. Male human, Transmuter5/Alp3: CR 8; Medium-Size Humanoid (5 ft., 8 in. tall); HD 5d4-5 plus 3d4-3; hp 15; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+3 Dex); Atk +1 melee (masterwork sword cane, rapier 1d6-3), +0 touch, +6 ranged touch; Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./ 5 ft.; SA: spells, formulae: Alchemical Homunculus, Quintessence, Corporeal Purifier; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +12; Str 5, Dex 16, Con 9, Int 20, Wis 16, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +18, Bluff +4, Concentration +10, Diplomacy +2, Heal +9, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Listen +5, Sense Motive +7, Search +7, Spell craft +13, Spot +7; Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Transmutation), Skill Focus (Alchemy), Vampiric Regeneration, Brew Potion;

Languages: Vaasi, Darkonese, Lamordian, Mordentish, Zherisian;

Possessions: masterwork sword cane, rapier, 3 doses of unflawed quintessence, gloves of Dexterity +2, ring of minor elemental resistance (acid), ring of minor elemental resistance (electricity), several heads of garlic;

Blighter. hp 11. Alchemical (VRA:vol.1 65) Homunculus; MM120.

Spells (DC=15+spell level, 17 + spell level against spells marked with an asterisk): detect poison, ray of frost, resistance, detect magic, mage hand; enlarge*, mage armor, shield, charm person, shocking grasp*, insatiable thirst; rheumatism*, mirror image, invisibility, Tasha's hideous laughter; haste*, gaseous form*, dispel magic;*

Count Artiari stands 5 feet 8 inches high, an obviously underfed person who had had few sleeping hours lately. His cheeks have turned in on themselves, his skin the color of bleached bone, and his hair and fingernails unkempt. Unlike his physique, the clothes and items he carries are in good care.

Combat: George is never one to fight like a brute. He considers this course of action preposterous and dangerous at best. He avoids open conflict whenever possible, often using his Bluff, Sense Motive and Diplomacy skills to talk his way through a conflict. He is not above using his spell repertoire, especially his *charm person* spell. If threatened, George will react by protecting himself with his magic. One the first round he casts *haste* on himself and retreats. If necessary, he casts *invisibility*. After these protections are in place, he attempts to place as many of his servants between himself and the attackers as possible. George will never meet with strangers without his *mage armor* already cast. As a last-resort, he

casts the *gaseous form* spell and immediately flees to unapproachable places such as secure caves in rocks.

If combat in the laboratory ensues, George will most likely try to call forth all his minions by striking the bell. After the reinforcements arrive he will try to use syringes with sleep poison or ether to put the PCs to sleep.

Santori Maino. Male fledgling vampire, Ftr5/Rog2: CR 9; Medium-Size Undead (6 ft., 2 in. tall); HD 5d10 plus 2d12; hp 60; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 21 (+3 Dex, +6 natural armor, +2 *ring of protection* +2), 22 with Dodge; Atk slam +12 melee (slam 1d6+6 and energy drain); Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./5 ft.; SA: domination, energy drain, blood drain, children of the night, create spawn, sneak attack 1d6; SQ: undead, damage reduction 15/+1, cold and electricity resistance 20, gaseous form, spider climb, alternate form, fast healing 5, vampire weaknesses, evasion; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 22, Dex 16, Con -, Int 15, Wis 10, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Climb +10, Hide +10, Jump +10, Listen +7, Move Silently +9, Ride +7, Spot +7, Swim +10, Iron Will, Exotic Weapons Proficiency (bastard sword), Dodge, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Darkness Within;

Languages: Vaasi, Darknese;

Possessions: *ring of protection* +2.

Santori Maino stands 6 feet 2 inches high, his eyes deep brown, his hair blonde. His facial features are small and angular, while his manner of dressing and posture make the onlooker believe Santori to be weakened by a disease or hunger. An unhealthy fever glows in his eyes, his hair is unkempt, and he leans to the side as he walks, as if trying to brace against something solid.

He prefers dressing in simple practical clothes, so as not to draw undue attention to his persona. He is usually garbed in brown leather breeches, a vest, gloves and a hat.

Background: Once a Moondale militiaman, Santori left the service for the life of a traveler and adventurer, luring his sister and his friends on this dangerous path. After several successful, if morally doubtful “adventures”, the party came upon the track of a vampire feeding on ignorant villagers. After securing an impressive sum for their service, the party ventured into the vampire’s lair. Yet the adventurers were unprepared for the encounter and were forced to retreat from the monster and his minions. The retribution came later that night when the vampire cursed Santori with vampirism and left him to prey on his own companions. A decade later Santori’s master was laid to rest by a group of monster hunters. Ever the survivalist, Santori escaped south. It was then that Santori met George Artiari.

Combat: Rather straightforward for a vampire, Santori ignores the obvious drawbacks of his state. The young vampire is ignorant of dangers of running water, or any other traditional vampiric weaknesses. He is brutal in his encounters with his prey, reveling in violence. The young vampire once possessed a mighty weapon, is a *+1 holy bastard sword*. Unable to wield the weapon himself, Santori has hidden it away somewhere in the lower dungeons

Dariana. Female Rog5/Brd1: CR 6; Medium-Size humanoid (5 ft. tall); HD 6d6+6; hp 25; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+4 Dex +1 *ring of protection* +1), 16 with Dodge; Atk masterwork rapier +8 melee

(masterwork rapier1d6), ranged +8 (masterwork light crossbow 1d8); Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft./ 5 ft.; SA: spells, sneak attack 3d6, bardic music; SQ: evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC), bardic knowledge; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +10, Will +3; Str 11, Dex 18, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 11, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: Balance +11, Bluff +6, Climb +5, Decipher Script +11, Diplomacy +10, Disable Device +11, Disguise +3, Escape Artist +9, Forgery +7, Gather Information +6, Hide +19, Innuendo +4, Intimidate +8, Intuit Direction +2, Jump +4, Knowledge (history) +7, Listen +5, Move Silently +19, Open Lock +7, Pick Pocket +6, Search +11, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5, Swim +5, Tumble +11, Use Magical Device +3, Use Rope +8; Expertise, Jaded, Back to the Wall, Dodge.

Languages: Vaasi, Darkonese, Balok;

Possessions: masterwork rapier, masterwork light crossbow, masterwork thieves’ tools, silk rope 50’, climbers’ kit, 10 *+1 crossbow bolts*, *ring of protection +1*, *cloak and boots of the Elvenkind*, 2 *potions of invisibility*, 1 *potion of cure moderate wounds*.

Spells(2): *detect magic*, *daze*, *read magic*, *light*. DC=11 + spell level.

Dariana is a plain-looking young woman in her twenties, her hair is deep brown in hue, and her and her eyes are the color of hazel. Dariana may be mistaken for a gnome or a halfling because of her small height. She will never be confused with a dwarf, though, for her frame seems delicate and fragile and she lacks facial hair.

Background. In early childhood tales of tombs and expeditions in far-away countries fascinated Dariana. Dariana wanted to participate in an archeological expedition herself for all

her life, yet because of her lowly birth she could not even hope to enter, let alone graduate from an institution of learning. So, with the logic of a simple farmer, she decided to explore on her own. Eventually, her activity in Darkon brought the attention of Kargat. The kargat agents decided her fit for the “special tasks” of their immediate mistress, a vampiress. The luring call of wealth and stature proved too much for her pride. Immediately recognizing the possibilities open to her by the new patrons, Dariana agreed with no second thought to the consequences of the choice. After several successful missions Dariana received an order to explore the castle on the Island of Liffe. It is Dariana mission to investigate the disappearance of the Count and to establish a new contact on Liffe.

Combat. Dariana prefers to stay out of any combat whatsoever, cleverly deducing that her calling lies in a different field. She prefers to stay in shadows, observing her prey. If ever she comes to blows with the PCs, Dariana will flee. Once her enemies tire of the hunt, she steals their most notable weapons and magical items. She does this while the PCs are sleeping or even in the castle itself if the opportunity presents itself. When she discovers the true nature of her enemy, she’ll try to secure magical items to help her slay the new count and his vampire patsy. Regardless of any opportunities she might encounter, her primary goal is to recover the Count’s diaries.

Defenders of the Misty Faiths

Adaptation of Defenders of the Faith

By Mark Graydon

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This is the second in the Misty Classes Series. It covers the book Defenders of the Faith, and the changes that might be applied to the items within when used in a Ravenloft game. As with the first article, Sword, Fist, and Mist, my goal in writing this has not been to alter the classes as written. As such, I have tried to stay as true as possible to the original ideas behind each prestige class, while still making sure that the rules of Ravenloft remain unbroken.

I have also tried to find ways to make sure that the classes have focuses that apply to Ravenloft. Finally, each class has been checked against the domains presented in the Ravenloft campaign setting, and using the skills common to each domain and the skills required for each class, I have been able to correlate which classes may be more common in which domains.

Church Inquisitor

Church Inquisitors are found in the faith of Ezra. Such Inquisitors are most commonly found in Dementlieu, in Ste. Mere des Larmes, where they do what they do best: investigate corruption within. Of course, these Inquisitors are always members of the Lawful Good or Lawful Neutral sects of Ezra. Otherwise, Church Inquisitors may be found in Darkon (within the Last Redoubt, under the suspicious eyes of Bastion Raines), and Sithicus (serving the churches of Ezra that have been accepted within that domain).

Alterations: Within Ravenloft, the Detect Evil ability of the Church Inquisitor is changed to become a Detect Chaos effect. This does not have the added abilities of the Paladin however (detecting innocence or evil outsiders).

Consecrated Harrier

Even though the domain has no native religions, Vorostokov has produced some of the best Consecrated Harriers in the lands of Mist. Such hardy northlanders have escaped the land of eternal winter, embraced religion and used their skills to hunt those who trespass against their holy tenets. Other Harriers may come from Darkon, Invidia, Kartakass, Mordent, Nidala, Nova Vassa, Richemulot, Sithicus or Valachan. When educated, the Wild Children of Sebuia can make talented Harriers.

Alterations: The Implacable Hunt ability of the Harrier does not function across domain borders within Ravenloft. However, once the Harrier is in the same domain as his quarry, he once again knows the direction and approximate distance of his prey, until one of them leaves the domain. The Faultless Hunt ability of the Harrier functions beyond open domain borders only.

Contemplative

This class is rare in the lands of Mist because required divine contact is blocked by the demiplane. There are a

few domains, however, where Contemplatives are most likely to arise. Contemplatives can be found in G'henna, Mordent, Nova Vassa, Har' Akiri, and Shri Raja. In Tepest and Nidala, Contemplatives of Belenus are the most common priests.

In Ravenloft, the requirement to become a Contemplative is eased a slight bit. The highest-ranking priest of their faith substitutes for their divine contact. Thus, the domains of G'Henna, Nidala, and Sri Raji have a few more Contemplatives than other domains, due to the presence of prominent religious leaders.

Alterations: The Divine Health ability is affected as the Paladin's ability of the same name. The Contemplative is not immune to lycanthropy, but is immune to Mummy Rot, provided the disease does not originate from a Darklord. The Mystic Union ability of the Contemplative at 10th level changes the creature into an Outsider. All of the rules that apply to Outsiders in the Ravenloft Setting book apply, including gaining a Reality Wrinkle if the Contemplative has a good or evil alignment. The contemplative gains the Good or Evil descriptor depending on moral alignment. Neither good nor evil contemplatives gain phylacteries, though an evil contemplative may use power rituals.

Divine Oracle

Divine Oracles are almost never genuine in Ravenloft. Either they are charlatans trying to bilk the common folk out of money or they are lonely madmen. However, once in a long while an actual Divine Oracle does come into being. There is no specific domain from which Divine Oracles are more likely to come.

Holy Liberator

The Holy Liberators are scattered through the lands of Mist, but are most commonly found in Odiare and Richemulot. In Odiare they are budding young warriors, fighting against the evil manipulations of Maligno and his soul-stealing Carrionettes. In Richemulot they often fight a much more sinister battle against thugs of the night and even corrupt nobles in power. Rarely, Holy Liberators may be found in Darkon, Dementlieu, G'Henna, Pharazia, Rokushima Taiyoo, Sri Raji, Tepest, and Vechor.

Alterations: The Detect Evil ability of the Holy Liberator is changed to Detect Law. This functions as the spell of the same name. The Divine Grace ability of the Liberator is affected as the Paladin's ability of the same name, as described in the Ravenloft Campaign Setting book. The Turn Undead ability of the Holy Liberator is affected as all Turning in Ravenloft. The Celestial Companion that the Liberator receives has all of the abilities described, but does not have a Reality Wrinkle and is in fact a Dread Companion.

Hospitaler

The healers known as the Hospitalers are found in a few domains in Ravenloft. Most commonly they are found in Nova Vassa, where they ride forth under the banner of the Lawgiver, giving their skills and abilities to those truly penitent to the Iron Tyrant. Such Hospitalers are Lawful Neutral. Hospitaliers may also be found in Hazlan, serving the same role, and in the lands of Har' Akir and Pharazia. In the

Wastes they usually follow Osiris, albeit in secret within Pharazia.

Hunter of the Dead

A class such as this is one of the very best suited to the Dread Realms. And most commonly they are found in the domains of Barovia, Darkon, Har'Akir, Mordent, and Tepest. They are almost always clerics, following the Morninglord, Ezra, Osiris, Hala, and Belenus, respectively. Grim determined folk, they often hunt from the shadows of night and are sometimes mistaken for the very creatures they prey upon. Other domains that may produce Hunters of the Dead are Borca, Dementlieu, Hazlan, Nidala, Richemulot, Sri Raji, and Verbrek.

Alterations: The Detect Undead ability of the Hunters is affected as the spell of the same name as described in the Ravenloft Campaign Setting. Darklords are immune to the True Death ability of the Hunter.

Knight of the Chalice

The enigmatic Knights of the Chalice principally come from the domain of Mordent in the Dread Realms. These Knights are often quite a sight on the battlefield, in their archaic (by Mordentish standards) full plate armour. These Knights are rare because of the relative scarcity of their prey in the demiplane. However, at least one of these Knights became famous in Nova Vassa, fighting a creature that is referred to in stories as "The Black Duke." Whether or not this creature was real, and whether or not it was of fiendish origin is still open to debate.

Alterations: The Censure Demons ability of the Knight does not send Demons back to their home planes.

Instead, it sends them to a random point within Ravenloft. The Courage of Heaven ability functions much as the Paladin's immunity to fear; that is, the Knight is immune to magical fear from demons, but not from natural Fear saves. However, he does get a +4 morale bonus to these saves provoked by Demons. While the Knight has his Consecrated Aura in effect Darklords can detect him as if he were a Paladin. While his Holy Aura is in effect, they can detect him as if he were wielding a Holy Avenger.

Knight of the Middle Circle

The Knights of the Middle Circle follow the prophecies left by a nameless, half-mad Vistana. No one is sure who the gypsy was, but there is some speculation in scholarly circles that the prophet may have been the elusive Hyskosa in his early years before he wrote of the Great Upheaval.

Regardless of the prophet's identity, Knights of the Middle Circle are most likely to come from either Nova Vassa or Richemulot. In both domains they still serve their original purpose, to fight evil by reading the signs. Naturally, they are a much more subdued group in Nova Vassa with Prince Othmar on the throne. Other domains that may spawn Knights of the Middle Circle are Darkon, Falkovnia, G'Henna, Har'Akir, Invidia, Kartakass, Mordent, Nidala, Paridon, Sithicus, Sri Raji, and Vorostokov.

Master of Shrouds

The Master of Shrouds can come from almost any domain. Deities such as the Eternal Order, Kali, the Lawgiver, Set, and Zhakata all give access to the domains needed to take up this prestige class. Hazlani natives usually have the

required skills as well as the magical background. With the importance of spell casting in that domain, a person capable of calling up the spirits of the dead has little trouble fitting into the magocracy.

Alterations: The Master of Shrouds receives a +1 bonus to his effective Master level (affecting the duration of Summon Undead abilities only) when he uses his Summon Undead powers. All undead (with 3 HD or more) summoned that turn on the Master when there are no more enemies to fight, receive a +2 bonus to their Turn Resistance score whenever the Master of Shrouds tries to rebuke them and thus stop them from turning on himself.

Sacred Exorcist

Sacred Exorcists come from the faiths of Ezra, Belenus, Ra, Osiris, and Tvashtri. They are particularly prominent with the Mordentish; the belief in the Spirit World is strong in that domain and tales of ghosts and other spirits are common. After that, Sacred Exorcists come from the worship of Osiris in Har'Akir, and many are said to be members of the organization known as the Green Hand.

Alterations: The Detect Evil ability of the Sacred Exorcist changes, depending upon her focus. If the Exorcist chooses undead as her focus, then her ability mimics the spell Detect Undead. If her enemy is Outsiders, then her ability allows her to sense the true nature of evil outsiders, as a Paladin. The Dispel Evil ability of the Exorcist is affected as the spell of the same name. The Consecrated Aura of the Exorcist allows a Darklord to sense her position within her domain as if she were a Paladin.

Sacred Fist

Sacred Fists are found in all religions in Ravenloft. The Fists of Belenus believe that their god's power will be sufficient to destroy all infidels against their religion, be they human or fey. The Divinity of Mankind has many Sacred Fists in its churches; the idea of fighting with only one's body is appealing to those following the philosophy of perfection.

Ezra's Fists are usually more concerned with the protection of the innocent, with the Bastion Raines faction being an exception. The Eternal Order's Fists believe that only the purity and power contained within the physical form will be sufficient to drive the undead back to the Grey Realm. Kali's fists are shadowy assassins in the night, sometimes leading the sacrificial squads when they go forth for their daily victims. The Lawgiver's Fists are brutal enforcers, bringing the edicts of the Iron Tyrant to the people.

The Morninglord's Fists are rare, as the message of hope that they wish to bring to people doesn't mesh well with physical strength. Orisis, Ra, and Set all have Fists, and they often take up this class just to lighten their load of weapons in the heat of the Amber Wastes. Tvashtri's clerics take up this class more to learn of its power and more about the physical form than for any defensive purposes. Still, there are domains that are more likely than others to produce Sacred Fists; Invidia, Paridon, Richemulot, Rokushima Taiyoo, Sri Raji, and Valachan are such lands.

Templar

Templars, like Sacred Fists, are another class that appears in all religions

in Ravenloft. The warrior-protectors of the temple have much in common with each other, regardless of the faith they follow. They are most likely to appear in G'Henna and Har'Akir (especially serving Set). Otherwise, they appear in Borca & Invidia (serving Hala), Mordent, Nidala, Nova Vassa, Sri Raji, and Tepest. As well, a number of domains produce good Templars, when their residents leave the domain and embrace religion. Lands such as Lamordia, Pharazia, Sanguinia, Sebua, and Vorostokov are good examples.

Warpriest

The Warpriest is an eccentricity in Ravenloft. Massive wars are almost unheard of in many of the domains, and as such, there is not much of a calling for this class. Of the religions in Ravenloft, the Divinity of Mankind, Ezra, Kali, the Lawgiver, the Morninglord, Osiris, the Wolf God, and Zhakata grant the domains necessary to take this class. Of these, Warpriests are most likely to appear in G'Henna, Pharazia, and Richemulot. In G'Henna, they are zealous agents of Yagno Petrovna, hunting the bandits in the wastes and the heretics in the cities. In Pharazia, they are secretive priests in hiding from Diamabel's persecution, worshipping Osiris and plotting the downfall of the angelic being. In Richemulot, such priests are usually military men, who actively help in the defence pact against aggressive Falkovnia. Otherwise, Warpriests may appear in Barovia, Borca, Darkon, Dementlieu, Har'Akir, Hazlan, Invidia, Paridon, Rokushima Taiyoo, Sri Raji, and Tepest.

Alterations: The rage ability is only usable if the Warpriest is currently not suffering from any Fear effect from Fear saves as well as magical fear. Any

bonus that applies to Fear saves also helps resist the Fear Aura. When the Warpriest uses the implacable foe ability a Darklord can sense him as a Paladin. See the Ravenloft Campaign Setting for more information.

Prestige Domains and Ravenloft's Gods

The following Deities in Ravenloft give access to the following prestige domains if the right prestige classes are chosen to attain them.

Belenus: Divination, Exorcism, Glory and Mysticism

Divinity of Mankind, The: Community, Creation, Divination, Domination, Mind

Eternal Order, The: Divination, Mysticism

Ezra: Community, Domination, Exorcism, Inquisition, and Mysticism

Hala: Divination

Kali: Creation, Madness, Mysticism, and Pestilence

Lawgiver, The: Community, Domination, Mysticism, and Pestilence

Morninglord, The: Community, Exorcism, and Mysticism

Osiris: Exorcism, Mysticism

Ra: Community, Exorcism, Glory, and Mysticism

Set: Domination, Mysticism, and Pestilence

Tvashtri: Creation, Mysticism

Wolf God, The: Beastmaster, Madness, Mysticism

Zhakata: Domination, Mysticism, and Pestilence

Spell Alterations

Aspect of the Deity: Casting the Evil version of this spell calls for a Powers Check.

Beast Claws: While this spell is in effect, a +1 penalty is applied to OR.

Blight: Casting this spell calls for a Powers Check.

Bolt of Glory: When casting this spell, any creature native to Ravenloft or any Outlander is considered to be from the Material Plane.

Brain Spider: Undead can raise their false thoughts as detailed on page 94 of the Ravenloft Campaign Setting under the heading “Mind-Affecting.” As well, if this spell is used to contact an aberration, elemental, ooze, outsider, plant, Darklord, or any creature suffering from Madness, then the caster must make a Madness check.

Burial Blessing: This spell protects from the creature becoming undead through the predations of other undead or through the various undead creation spells. However, it does not protect against the chance of becoming undead when being Raised or Resurrected.

Curse of Lycanthropy: Casting this spell calls for a Powers Check. This lycanthropy can only be removed in the same manner as other forms of lycanthropy, as detailed in the Ravenloft Campaign Setting. To remove the blight, normally the progenitor of the line must be killed. In this case, the caster of the spell is the progenitor.

Genesis: This spell cannot be cast in the Dread Realms, because Ravenloft is

considered to be on the Material Plane. As well, the spell cannot be cast from the Near Ethereal, because it is too close to the Material Plane to create a Demiplane.

Greater Aspect of the Deity: Because this spell is mortal magic (albeit powerful magic) it does not grant the caster a Reality Wrinkle.

Harrier: The creature that is created by this spell may attempt a Will save with a –2 penalty upon being created to escape control of its master. If it succeeds, then what it does is up to the DM, although the creature is not corrupted in alignment, and has no home plane to return to.

Lesser Telepathic Bond: This spell is affected as under “Mind-Affecting” on page 94 of the Ravenloft Campaign Setting.

Monstrous Thrall: This spell is affected as under “Enchantment” on page 93 of the Ravenloft Campaign Setting.

Otyugh Swarm: The Otyughs created by this spell may make a Will save with a –2 penalty to avoid control. Should they escape control they will act as normal for their kind.

Plague of Rats: The Dire Rat swarm can make a single Will save with a –2 penalty to avoid control when summoned. Should they be uncontrolled, they will usually attack the closest living thing.

Probe Thoughts: This spell is affected as under “Mind-Affecting” on page 94 of the Ravenloft Campaign Setting.

Scourge: Casting this spell calls for a Powers Check.

Slime Wave: The Green Slime summoned by this spell is not sentient, and as such, cannot escape any control from this spell.

True Domination: This spell is affected as under “Enchantment” on page 93 of the Ravenloft Campaign Setting.

Unbinding: This spell can affect magical curses as normal. Curses of Vengeance and Self-Induced Curses are affected only if the caster of Unbinding has the same or greater amount of HD than the original layer of the Curse. As well, Dangerous and Lethal Curses cannot be undone by this spell, no matter how many HD the caster has.

Weapon of the Deity: This spell functions normally within Ravenloft. Below is a list of recommended weapons (as provided by “Ask Azalin” on the Secrets of the Kargatane website):

Belenus: +1 frost sickle

The Divinity of Mankind: +1 defending quarterstaff

The Eternal Order: +1 ghost touch scythe

Ezra: +1 defending long sword

Hala: +1 spell storing dagger

Kali: +1 flaming sap

The Lawgiver: +1 shock whip

The Morninglord: +1 defending half spear

Osiris: +1 ghost touch light flail

Ra: +1 keen falchion

Set: +1 mighty cleaving short sword

Tvashtri: +1 shock punching dagger

The Wolf God: --

Zhakata: +1 flaming flail

Sacred Gear CL's

CL 2: Altar Cloth (all); Brazier (all sizes, bronze only); Candle, Temple; Incense (all); Holy Symbol, Bronze; Snuffing Bell

CL 3: Aspergillum (all); Brazier (all sizes, all metals); Candelabra (all); Candle, 12-Hour; Candle, Timekeeping; Candlestick (all); Censer (all); Holy Symbol (all)

CL 4: Altar Case (all); Prayer Book or Scripture (all)

CL 5: Candle, Vigil

Magical Item Alterations

Armour or Shield Enchantments

Called: This enchantment will not allow an armour or shield to cross a closed domain border. Should the owner try and call the armour or shield across the borders when they are closed, nothing will happen, and the armour or shield will not move from its place.

Energy Drain: Every time the draining of this armour is used, a Powers Check with a 4% chance of failure must be made.

Ethereal: This enchantment is limited in Ravenloft. See “Ethereal” on page 93 of the Ravenloft Campaign Setting.

Undead Controlling: Any undead in Ravenloft may make a Will save (DC 20) to avoid the control this armour or shield exerts. Undead with more than 3 HD get a +2 bonus to this save. This power cannot affect Darklords, and every use of it requires a Powers Check with a 7% chance of failure.

Specific Weapons

Battle Rod: The morale bonus this Rod gives out also applies to Fear & Horror checks.

Specific Wondrous Item

Black Patch: This magical item functions normally for Calibans.

Gate Amulet: This item has no function in Ravenloft, and is often considered to be a non-functional piece of jewellery.

Helm of Vision: The True Seeing function of this helm is altered as the spell of the same name. See page 102 in the Ravenloft Campaign Setting.

Mask of the Dead: When this mask is used, a Powers Check with a 3% chance of failure must be made.

Children of the Night

Phantom Fighter

Jim Rook

Male human Mnk 10: CR 10; Medium-size Humanoid (human); HD 10d8+20; hp 70; Init +1; Spd 60 ft; AC 16 (+1 Dex, +3 Wiz, +2 class); Atk: +7/+2 Melee (+8/+5/+2, 1d10+1; crit 20/x2, unarmed attack); SA Stunning attack, Improved trip, Ki strike +1; SQ evasion, deflect arrows, still mind, slow fall (50 ft), purity of body, wholeness of body, improved evasion; AL LG; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +10; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 12.

Skills and Feats: balance +5 (+6), climb +8 (+11), diplomacy +6 (+7), escape artist +13 (+14), hide +11 (+12), jump +8 (+11), knowledge (arcana) +5 (+6), listen +11 (+14), move silently +11 (+14); Ethereal Empathy, Ethereal Touch, Ghost Sight, skill focus: knowledge (ghost lore), sworn enemy (undead).

Languages: Darkonese, Dementlieuse.

Equipment: *Traveling cloths, cloak, backpack, Belt of the Monk.*

The streets of Martira Bay were no place to raise a child, but as the son of a poor widower, there was no other place for Jim Rook live. Since he was old enough to walk Jim Rook wandered the streets with other urchins of the city, joining in the gangs of children who warred with one another for begging spots. Rook grew to be a large young man, considering himself the protector

of his gang he spent much of his time fighting. As the years past Rook put his talents to other uses and became a prizefighter in the bare-knuckle fight rings of the docks.

Before he reached adulthood Rook was an established fighter. Unlike many of his opponents, Jim devoted his free time to training his body and learning the different techniques of fighting. The sailors that frequented Marina Bay proved in inexhaustible source of learning, from Tepesti head butts to the Capoeira fighting survivors from Sarragossa, Rook learned them all in the bar room brawls of the Bay. Unusually contemplative for a fighter, Jim Rook pursued his fighting career with the same dedication as a priest to his god.

Yet even a great fighter is not immune to the whims of fate. Jim Rook proved as stubborn as he was strong and when refused to fight in a death match for the profit of a criminal organization, he all but signed his death warrant. Of the assassins who came for him, only one survived the struggle, yet in the end Rook was left to drown in a pool of his own blood. In the throws of death the warrior struggled to retain consciousness, and it was then in the cold, crimson dementia that he saw an image that would haunt him forever: The Grim Reaper.

Surrounded by its flowing cloak the skeletal creature reached out for him. With every ounce of his strength he struggled to pull himself free of the

grizzly puddle, yet his bloodless body resisted. The Reaper reached up from the depths of the blood pool, reaching closer and closer until its bony fingers just barely brushed his face. With the shocking burn of cold Rook found the strength to lift his body from the puddle. As his bloodied lungs vomited his own ichors the reaper vanished back into the mists.

Though he had survived the experience had changed him forever. Five black scars have traced themselves down his face, tracing the path of the reapers fingers as it tried to grasp him. In the instant of death Rook had gained a second sight, the ability to see through the veil of life and into the misty realm of the dead. At first Rook tried to put the experience behind him, yet his second sight profoundly disturbed him. Everywhere he looked he could see the hidden images left by the dead and the dying. Evil and death had left its taint on the world, a horrible image that haunted every nook and cranny of the world.

Jim Rook wandered the world, looking for a place to hide from the images. Yet as he traveled Rook uncovered a secret that chilled him to the core. The world beyond the living was populated with more than just the essence of Death, but also the dead themselves. These restless spirits lived in the border between the living and the dead, haunting the living world and spreading the misery of their unlife. Unable to bear the horror of these “ghosts” Rook has devoted himself to their destruction.

In the time since his brush with death Rook has become a wandering ghost-hunter. He has traveled to many of the lands of the core and even to lands deep within the mists. Wherever he finds a restless spirit he tries to put it to its eternal slumber. Most often this involves lengthy research and persuasion, though Rook is more than prepared to subdue those who do not wish to move on.

Secrets and Sorcery

P.R.I.M.E.

The world is in chaos. Americans capitalists run wild, the Germans and French plot for bloody warfare, and the Ottoman Empire teeters on the brink of failure. The lesser cultures of the world buck the yoke of western civilization. They are as children running wild within a house, in need of a stern father to maintain order and discipline. It is the British Empire that is that father, though the spread of democracy and “responsible government” has fatally weakened its monarchs and its aristocracy. The responsibility falls to PRIME to ensure that British civilization expands across the globe, dominates the lesser nations and brings one and all under the absolute rule of the Empire.

History

The exact origin of PRIME is known only to a select few. It is a relatively new qabal with no meaningful connection to the Defiance. The Permanent Review of Imperial Military Expansion began as a council of English officials reporting directly to the Crown. This organization was held responsible for gathering intelligence upon the British military, organizing counter intelligence operations, reviewing both military expenditures and diplomatic operations and making recommendations to the King.

Over the years the council of PRIME gathered power. PRIME recruited officials throughout the government, the military and the private sector. PRIME created a conspiracy

within the military to ensure that members of PRIME were elevated into key positions in the armed forces. The qabal expanded into the judiciary, inducting judges and attorneys into the conspiracy. PRIME expanded into the police force and through the police PRIME gained connections into the criminal underworld.

Though PRIME began under the rule of law, an obsession with power drove its leading members to create a law of their own. PRIME no longer answers to the crown, having been discarded in 1875. Since then, PRIME has abandoned the monarchy, and is dedicated to furthering its goal for total world domination.

Activities

The goal of PRIME is nothing short of total world domination by the British Empire. PRIME patiently pursues this goal, operating slowly to ensure secrecy. To accomplish this goal, PRIME simultaneously pursues several different strategies. Agents of PRIME can be found all over the world, pursuing these strategies.

First, PRIME encourages the Empire to strengthen its military. Britain remains the most powerful military force in the world, though the lesser nations have begun to rival the empire. To resolve this problem, PRIME has begun efforts to incite a major war that will encompass the entire world. Through careful planning, PRIME believes that Britain can

manipulate the lesser civilizations to destroy each other in this hypothetical Great War. Once defeated, the peoples of the lesser nations will turn away from their shattered nations and over the course of years be willingly assimilated into the mighty British Empire.

Next, PRIME seeks to manipulate the world economy to shatter stable nations. PRIME has invested great energy into manipulating the flow of investments. The qabal seeks to spread ignorance and incompetence throughout market, transferring the leadership of the economy from rational, cool headed businessmen into indecisive, fearful fools. Once the seeds of incompetence are sewn, PRIME will strike with a flood of misinformation, rumour and sabotage. While panic paralyses the market, the world economy will fall drastically, creating an atmosphere of chaos and uncertainty. This theoretical Great Depression will cause the lesser nations like France, Germany, Russia and the United States to crumble under the strain. Through it all, Britain will exploit the chaos, an island order in the sea of chaos. From that island, Britain will lend aid to the fallen nations, all the while manipulating them into complete dependence.

Third, PRIME prepares to pursue its goal through terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. Through connections in the military, PRIME has begun to develop weapons with the potential to make all previous forms of weaponry obsolete. There are a number of secret projects underway to develop new forms of warfare, that PRIME might use to forcible bring other nations to their knees. These projects are headed by individual sections of PRIME, each pursuing its own weapon. Currently there are projects based on creating

military aircraft, the development of a massive submersible, an intercontinental explosive projectile and even a tunnelling machine. Should PRIME feel it necessary to exercise its power, these unstoppable weapons could be used to terrify rebellious nations into submission.

As PRIME pursues its goals, it requires secrecy and funding. The majority of the agents of PRIME are devoted to raising monetary funds and ensuring absolute secrecy. PRIME is completely unforgiving to careless agents who expose PRIME. The counter intelligence sector of PRIME assassinates anyone who could potentially reveal PRIME to the world. A large network of criminal and commercial investments keeps PRIME well funded. This network is overseen by PRIME agents, but is staffed by mundane criminals and employees.

Membership and Organization

A council of ten men, born of ancient nobility, leads PRIME. These men choose their own successors, who take their predecessors place after their death. The council oversees the administration of PRIME and is obeyed without question. Beneath the council are the chairmen of each “sector”. Each sector is responsible for one task: Sector one is devoted to the British Military and sector two to intelligence gathering within Britain and in all other nations. Sector three is occupied with influencing the British government as well as the police force. Sector four is devoted to controlling PRIME’s organized criminal empire.

Sector Five is completely invested in economic manipulation, both

for raising funds and for world domination. Sector six is charged with the creation of weapons of mass destruction. Sector seven is occupied with the internal security of PRIME. Sector eight is the most secretive branch, for it is responsible for magical research. PRIME has fostered a gathering of mages, who labour to increase PRIME's knowledge of magic and all things supernatural.

Each sector is subdivided into a "section" which is responsible for specific projects. A single administrator, who answers to the chairman of his respective sector, leads these sections. These administrators are charged with recruiting new members. The recruiting process involves lengthy investigations into the background of each agent. Agents are organized into cells, under the administrator of that sector. These cells work in ignorance of the other agents within their section, only the administrator is aware of all agents in a section. Most individual agents maintain employment in private and public agencies, only to be activated in special circumstance. A few are permanently devoted to a task, such as overseeing the development of a weapon or overseeing a criminal organization. Individual agents are most often ignorant of the true nature of PRIME. This internal secrecy allows PRIME to recruit agents from all nations, from American businessmen to Russian bureaucrats.

Perspective agents are recruited in different ways, depending upon the section that recruits them. Since lower agents are only given a minimum of information, loyalty is more flexible in PRIME than in other qabals. Individuals are rarely even given the name of the organization that employs them, let alone the identities of their coworkers.

The lethal efficiency of sector seven has ensured that discretion is instilled within even the untrustworthy agent. Agents are recruited on the basis of their expertise within their profession, whether that is a brutal thug, an engineer, or a businessman. Progression through the ranks is nonexistent for agents are assigned to their individual position for life.

Agents required to fulfill higher roles within a section or sector are selected at a young age for their intelligence and ambition. Their very lives are manipulated and are thus specially trained to fulfill the position. PRIME also employs a great many individuals who are never made into agents. This status comprises of bribed politicians and crooked policemen working for sector three, smugglers and criminals working under sector four, employees of businesses managed by sector five, and engineers working on weapons for sector six.

Sector eight, the department of magical research and development, uses different recruitment policies. All qabalists in sector eight are agents, trained by a series of high-level qabalists who work directly under the supervision of the administrators. Sector eight is closely watched by sector seven. Since the qabalists are the single most powerful internal threat to PRIME, they are often the victims of the paranoid security department.

Resources

The efforts of all eight sections have made PRIME the best-equipped qabal on Earth. Within the British Empire and its former colonies, Canada and Australia, there is nothing unavailable to agents of PRIME. Sector eight maintains a modest library of the

arcane, though they can easily gather any written document in a matter of days. The constant research and development within Sector six has yielded a variety of powerful scientific devices. Agents of PRIME lie in wait all over the civilized world. Should the hierarchy deem it necessary, these agents will be activated to assist any operation or offer protection

Adventure Hooks

PRIME can be introduced in any number of ways. With so many operations at work, any serious investigation might uncover the massive conspiracy at work. The agents of the dreaded section seven are sure to be activated to silence any investigator, though this could serve to draw a party of adventurers only deeper into an investigation.

Thaddeus Gat

Male human, 7th level criminal: CR 7, SZ M humanoid; HD 7D6+14, HP 42; Inn 3; Spd 30; AC 13; Atk 5, 6 dagger (melee 1D4+1), 8 dagger (thrown), 8 navy pistol (ranged 1D10); SA sneak attack +4D6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge (dex bonus, can't be flanked); AL LE; SV: Fort +3, Reflex +5, Will +4; Str 13, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 17, Wiz 14, Cha 15. Skills and Feats: appraise 8, bluff 12, diplomacy 10, disguise 12, escape artist 10, gather information 8, hide 10, innuendo 5, intimidate 8, listen 9, move silently 10, open locks 10, search 9, sense motive 12, spot 9. Alertness, combat reflexes, improved initiative, quick draw.
Languages: English, French, and German

Equipment: dagger +1, navy pistol, 30 rounds, fine business suit, amulet of natural armour +2.

Thaddeus Gat is a nondescript man; he is of average height and build and his face betrays no distinguishing features. His very lack of features makes him oddly recognizable, which is why Gat has trained himself to be the master of disguise. Thaddeus is a cold and calculating man, jaded by the brutality of the world. He is a cruel man, but takes no joy from victimizing others.

Growing up in the industrial slums of Birmingham, Gat learned that the key to survival was power. Thaddeus rose quickly through the ranks of the underworld, for there was no law he wasn't willing to break and no person he wouldn't kill. Gat proved such a willing assassin, that agents of PRIME couldn't help but take notice and report him to their superiors. The young criminal was brought before the mysterious leader of the dreaded Sector 7 and offered a position as an enforcer. Though he had no desire to join the organization, he was smart enough to realise that refusal meant certain death. Since 1885 Gat has applied his talents to maintaining security within PRIME.

Thaddeus Gat can be found in the middle of nearly any PRIME operation. As an agent of Sector 7, he is required to investigate the activities of every sector. Gat has made a name for himself as an efficient agent and is occasionally called in to eliminate and temporarily replace less competent agents. The higher-ranking administrators of PRIME see Gat as an all round trouble-shooter, for use by all sectors but the leaders of Sector 7 see this as a security threat. As

such, Gat is always under the scrutiny of his superiors.

Gat is conflicted by his situation. While he despises being sector 7's whipping boy, he enjoys the challenges. Gat is trapped within the PRIME conspiracy, held to loyalty under the threat of death. Even still, Thaddeus knows that if free he would inevitably drift to a similar organization, craving the chance to prove his superior abilities.

When faced with a problem, Gat seeks the most efficient way to end the problem. Victims are bludgeoned, poisoned, stabbed, shot or ambushed by

hired thugs and their bodies buried, incinerated or weighted down and thrown into a river.

Gat is a patient killer; he takes time to discredit investigators who have uncovered PRIME operations and then arranges for them to die in apparent accidents. Groups of investigators are broken up and then picked off one at a time. Gat uses his connections throughout all sectors to coordinate intricate operations; he can obtain crooked police, spell casters, bribed politicians and anything else under the power of PRIME.

Smoking Barrels

New Rules For Firearms

Shortly after their appearance, firearms began to dominate warfare. On the surface, this is a confusing development since early rifles were primitive, inaccurate, short-ranged, unwieldy, unreliable and difficult to reload. These factors were heavily stacked against the firearm and remained so for centuries. Yet the true strength of the gun lay in its unique qualities. Indeed, firearms have qualities that no other weapon possesses; the use of firearms permanently changes the very nature of warfare.

Firearms are different from traditional weapons, the bullets they fire impact with speed and force unseen in any other projectile. The tremendous forces behind a bullet allow it to batter through armor. The compact size and simple mechanism of a firearm allow soldiers to be trained in its use in a tiny fraction of the time required to master a longbow. Bows and crossbows require the user to compensate for the arc of the projectile while the firearm is a relatively simple direct fire weapon. These small differences make firearms extremely easy to use and capable of feats impossible for traditional weapons.

This article will explore a series of optional rules for the use of firearms, which will reflect the lethal nature of these weapons. While these rules are directed at firearms, some of these rules could also be applied to weapons such as crossbows.

Aimed Fire

The long ranged rifle allows experts to place bullets into vital area of a body. Indeed, the aimed bullet is much more potent than traditional missile weapons. The firing arc of a bullet is miniscule compared to a quarrel or an arrow, allowing a cautious sniper to fell men at amazing distances. However, this level of accuracy requires a level of expertise unknown by ordinary combatants.

A character proficient with a rifle may use the skill concentration to improve his chances of striking a target. A character may spend a full round action aiming his weapon. At the end of that round he may make a concentration check against a DC 15, modified by +1 for every range increment for the firearm between the character and his target. The character may elect to devote any number of rounds to lining up the shot, and subsequently gains a bonus to the check equal to the number of rounds spent.

If the check succeeds, then the character has lined up his shot. He gains a bonus of +1 to his attack for every two points by which the concentration check succeeded.

Itchy Trigger Finger

Firearms have an advantage over bows and thrown weapons. The trigger mechanism allows a character to send the missile forth in a fraction of a second. This allows a character with a

gun to hold his action to the very last moment.

Under the rules for readying an action, as described on page 134 in the Players Handbook, only partial actions can normally be readied. When a character is armed with a firearm, he or she may ready a full attack action with that firearm.

Under the Gun

Unlike larger weapons like crossbows, or thrown weapons like knives, a firearm can be aimed into vital areas, with extremely little effort or expertise. A character with a firearm may delay an attack to place any one character “under the gun”, provided he is flat footed in that round. A character holding another “under the gun” can do nothing more than move five feet in a round. Furthermore, if a character “under the gun” is allowed to take a full action, he is no longer considered under the gun. Indeed, should a target “under the gun” attempt to take a full action, the attacker must use his readied action to fire on the target, otherwise the target is not considered under the gun.

A target “under the gun” is considered flatfooted. The target may remain flat footed for as long as the attacker holds the gun on him, or until the attacker makes his first attack with that gun. Since the target is flatfooted, he is denied any armor class bonus from dexterity or dodging in regards to that attack. A character that is “under the gun” and is hit by this attack must make a fortitude save against a DC equal to the attacker’s attack roll. If the check fails, then the character dies instantly. If the check succeeds, he takes damage normally.

Penetration

Firearms hurl bullets at speeds great enough to pierce through metal. This has rendered traditional armor much less effective, and eventually obsolete. Bullets fired from muzzle-loaded firearms, such as muskets, are hurled at great velocity. The bonus to armor class from armor or natural armor granted to a target of such a firearm is halved.

Advanced firearms use ammunition that combines the powder and bullet into one cartridge. These combined bullets are fired at even higher speeds. The target of a such a weapon is denied any armor class bonus from armor or natural armor.

Rapid Fire

Certain guns are capable of rapidly firing in a short space of time. This ability is limited to revolvers and pump action and lever action rifles. Bolt-action rifles are incapable of this feat. A character proficient with a firearm may elect to make one extra rapid fire attack for every attack granted by his base attack bonus. This ability works similar to the feat Rapid fire, though because of the simple design of firearms this option is available to any character proficient with a firearm.

A rapid-fire attack is made at the highest base attack bonus. For every rapid-fire attack used in a round, all attacks made that round suffer a –2 penalty. A character may only make a maximum number of attacks equal to the number of bullets in the gun’s magazine.

Reloading

Reloading a firearm can be a difficult task. Some weapons use stripper clips and others are breach

loaded, making the effort of reloading much more simple. Reloading a stripper clip or a breach loader requires only a partial action.

Firearms such as revolvers require more time to reload. Inserting three rounds into the chamber requires a move equivalent action. Rifles with internal magazines are even more difficult to reload. Reloading three rounds into an internal magazine requires a full round action. While reloading, a character is considered flatfooted. The character may take no actions while reloading. The act of reloading provokes an attack of opportunity.

Wild Fire

Firing a gun need not be a complicated procedure. There are times where it is more convenient to throw aim to the wind and rapidly discharge bullets

into empty space. By taking a full attack action, a character may make a Wild Fire attack. These attacks can only be made with revolvers or repeating rifles.

The character takes an attack action to empty the entire magazine of the firearm in one round, but makes no attack roll. Instead, he fires into a cone. This cone is as wide at its end as it is long, with a length chosen by the attacker. All creatures in the cone must make a reflex save against a DC of 10 or else suffer damage as though having been hit by one bullet. Targets gain a bonus to their reflex save equal to +1 for every five feet of cone length. A maximum of one target is hit for every round discharged in the cone. Furthermore no matter how many rounds are discharged, a given target may only suffer damage as though hit by one bullet.

Tactics and Techniques

Firearm Feats

Cavalryman

The skill of mounted archery is long since dead on Gothic Earth. However, the ability to use a pistol while riding remains an important ability. This feat allows a character to aim a pistol while riding.

Prerequisite: Mounted combat.

Benefit: The penalty for firing a pistol from horseback is halved. Thus the penalty is -2 instead of -4. When the mount makes a double move the penalty becomes -4.

Normal: The usual penalty for firing a missile weapon while riding horseback is -4 and -8 while the horse is making a double move.

Deadly Aim

By placing a bullet into a vital area, an attack can deal more damage. However, aiming a bullet thusly reduces the accuracy of the shot. A character with this feat may gain a bonus to the damage roll with a firearm by taking a penalty to his attack roll.

Prerequisite: Proficient in a firearm, base attack bonus +1.

Benefit: A PC may use this feat when making a full attack action. The character takes a penalty to his attack roll with a firearm. If that attack succeeds, the damage roll gains a bonus equal to the penalty to the attack roll. A character may only take a maximum penalty equal to his base attack bonus. Making a power attack with a firearm requires a full attack action.

Improved Rapid Shot

With this feat a character may increase the amount of attacks he receives with a firearm.

Prerequisites: Proficiency in Firearm used, Base attack +5.

Benefit: A character with this feat may make any number of extra attacks with a firearm at his highest base attack bonus. For each extra attack made that round all attacks suffer a -2 cumulative penalty. For example, a character may choose to make 3 extra attacks in a round, penalizing all attacks with a penalty of -6.

A character may make a maximum number of attacks as he has rounds of ammunition in the magazine of his firearm. Attacks made by normal base attack bonus are made before any extra attacks granted by this feat. Thus, if a character had a base attack bonus of +6/+1 and only possessed two bullets, he would only make two attacks at +6/+1, as opposed to two at +4/+4.

Speedy Reload

A character with this feat has developed a talent for reloading a weapon. In the heat of battle a soldier tries to bring every bullet to bear against his enemy.

Prerequisite: Dex 13+

Benefit: A character with this feat can reload a weapon much more quickly than a normal character. With this feat, a character may reload six bullets into a

revolver with only a move equivalent action. Reloading a rifle with a clip may be accomplished as a free action once in a single round. Finally, three bullets can be loaded into a firearm with an internal magazine using only a move equivalent action.

Two Pistol Shooting

This feat grants a character the skill to shooting two pistols at the same time.

Prerequisites: Dex 13+, ambidexterity, proficiency in firearms
Benefit: Feats such as two weapon fighting only apply to melee weapons. This feat allows character to use two pistols in both hands. While using this feat the penalties to the attack rolls for firing with both hands are reduced by two. With this feat and ambidexterity the character may make two attacks with a penalty of only -2 to both attacks.

Tools of War

Weapons in Gothic Earth

The Victorian Age is a time of unprecedented weapons technology. Advances in chemistry and engineering have allowed gunsmiths to create weapons many times more powerful than the primitive muzzleloaders of the past. At the same time, traditional weapons such as swords and bows are discarded. These weapons have become so foreign, that they are considered symbolic novelties rather than true tools of war.

The descriptions below characterize the weapons available to characters in the Victorian Age. The prices listed may vary from one area to another

Melee Weapons

Since mankind first wielded weapons, he has strived to find some way to attack while staying farther from his enemy. Despite his efforts, men are still forced to engage in close combat. The following is a list of many of the melee weapons a character will encounter.

Axe: Centuries ago the axe was a weapon of war. Common axes are too unwieldy for regular combat, but they remain useful tools. When caught without a better weapon an axe can be improvised as a melee weapon. By the year 1890, few humans still understand the nuisances of combat with this weapon. All axes are considered to be exotic weapons, and so impose a -4 penalty to attack rolls.

Some axes are two-handed weapons, thus they grant a damage bonus equal to 1.5 times a characters strength modifier, rather than just the strength bonus. Two-handed axes are large sized weapons, weigh ten pounds and deal 1D8 slashing damage on a successful hit.

There are also hatchets that are one-handed medium sized axes, these weapons deal 1D6 slashing damage and weigh three pounds apiece. Hatchets can be thrown as melee weapons, with a range increment of 10 feet. The critical threat range of both the two handed axe and the hatchet are 20/*3.

Baton: The baton is a simple club carried by police forces and some officers. Batons care often made of hardened wood, but some metal varieties also exist. Batons are medium sized clubs, weigh 2 pounds and deal 1D4 damage with a successful hit. The critical range of a baton is 19-20/*20. Batons are simple weapons.

Bayonet: The bayonet is a knife that can be mounted upon the barrel of a rifle. A bayonet thus mounted transforms a rifle into a deadly spear. When not mounted, a bayonet is a simple combat knife, but when mounted on a rifle the bayonet becomes even more dangerous. A rifle with a bayonet acts like a large weapon with reach allowing it to threaten enemies ten feet away, and even capable of striking adjacent foes.

A bayonet mounted rifle deals 1D6 piercing damage on a successful strike.

The threat range of a bayonet is 19-20/*2. Bayoneting tactics train soldiers to charge in with a bayonet, piercing the body with great force. Rifle mounted bayonets deal double damage when making a charge attack. Bayonets are martial weapons when used as combat knives and when mounted on rifles.

Though rifles carry bayonet mounts, they are imperfect spears. Each time that a character uses a bayonet mounted on a rifle, the rifle stands a chance of being bent. Each strike carries a 5% chance of being bent; the strength modifier of the character wielding it modifies this probability. Thus a character with 15 strength would have a total of 7% probability of bending the rifle. If a rifle becomes bent the gun automatically misfires on every shot and must be repaired by replacing the barrel.

Club, metal: When danger strikes without warning, men must pick their weapons when they find them. Metal clubs represent metal pipes, posts, broken rifles or even twisted pieces of metal. When a metal club weighs only 2 pounds, it acts as a baton. Anything heavier acts as a metal club. A metal club is 10 pounds on average and is a large weapon.

Metal clubs deal 1D8 bludgeoning damage and threaten a critical range of 20/*3. Metal clubs are treated as simple weapons.

Using a rifle as a club is a dangerous affair. Each time the rifle strikes it carries a 10% chance of bending, modified by the strength modifier of the character wielding it and the hardness of the target. For example, a character with a strength of 14 hits a wooden door with a hardness of 5. The total probability of bending the rifle barrel with each hit becomes 18%. It

should be noted that the total modifier for strength is +3 because the metal club is a two handed weapon, and as such applies 150% of the characters strength modifier.

Club, wood: Just like with the metal club, the wooden club is an improvised weapon. When a wooden club is less than four feet long it is treated as a baton, everything larger is a wooden club. Large wooden clubs consist of wood posts, axe handles and tree branches. Wooden clubs weigh 6 pounds on average and are large weapons. These clubs deal 1D6 bludgeoning damage on a successful hit and threaten a critical range of 20/*2. Wooden clubs are considered simple weapons.

Combat Knife: Combat knives come in many different varieties, but they all function in the same manner. Combat knives are tiny weapons that weigh two pounds. Combat knives deal 1D4 slashing and piercing damage and threaten a critical range of 19-20/*2. Combat knives can be thrown with a range increment of 10 feet. Combat knives used in melee are simple weapons while a thrown combat knife is considered an exotic weapon.

Garrote: The garrote is a favoured weapon of spies for eliminating victims silently. The garrote is a simple length of strong, thin wire. Often garrottes are built with wooden handles to allow a character to put his strength into the attack. Garrottes cannot be used in melee combat unless the target is flatfooted or is flanked by the attacker. In essence, when ever the target could be hit by a sneak attack from the character, that character could use a garrote.

A successful attack roll against a victim's AC allows the character to place the garrote over the victim's throat and begin choking the victim. Garrotes deal 1D6 damage; any victim garroted is considered to be grappled by the character with the garrote. For every round that the victim is thus grappled he takes another 1D6 damage. Garrotes are considered exotic weapons.

The grapple is resolved as any other grapple, with the garroting character gaining a +2 circumstantial bonus to his rolls. Normal garrotes deny attackers their damage bonus from strength, gripping the wire too tightly is dangerous since the wire is so thin. If the garrote is built with wooden handles then the character wielding it may add his strength modifier to the damage dealt. Garrotes threaten a critical range of 18-20/*3.

The first attack with the garrote allows a character to apply sneak attack damage, but any subsequent rounds of dealing damage with the garrote on that same character does not gain the sneak attack damage. Characters being garroted cannot speak scream or shout until they are freed from the grapple. Characters wearing a form of special neck armor are completely protected from garrote attacks. Garrotes are considered exotic weapons, for while their use is simple, it is difficult to loop the wire around a victim's neck.

Hammers: Like the axe, the war hammer has been long abandoned as a weapon of war.

Nonetheless, when the danger strikes beggars can't be choosers. Hammers come in different sizes, and are wielded in different ways. All hammers are exotic weapons, thus they impose a -4

nonproficiency penalty to anyone wielding them.

Regular hammers are mere tools, far better at hammering a nail than bashing skulls. These items are small hand weapons that weigh one pound. They may deal 1D4 bludgeoning damage with a successful hit and threaten a critical range of 20/*2. Hand hammers may be thrown with a range increment of 10 feet.

Sledgehammers are large weapons, weighing 12 pounds. Sledges deal 1D8 bludgeoning damage with each hit; they threaten a critical range of 20/*3.

Pistol Butt: Though the barrel of a pistol is usually the business end, there are occasions where the handle of a gun is a useful weapon. Pistols lack the weight of a rifle, thus they are even less effective than the butt of a rifle. Pistol buttes deal 1D2 damage and threaten a critical range of 20/*2. Pistol butts are small sized, simple weapons.

Rapier: Rapiers are found through Europe, though they have long since been abandoned by armies as weapons of war. These blades are long and thin, designed for stabbing rather than slashing. Rapiers weigh five pounds, deal 1D6 piercing damage with each hit and threaten a critical range of 18-20/*2. These weapons are exotic, medium sized weapons.

Rifle Butt: The butt of a rifle makes a good improvised weapon. Rather than wield the rifle as a club, the character lifted the rifle and brings its narrow butt down onto the victim. Rifle butts deal 1D4 bludgeoning damage and threaten a critical range of 20/*2.

All rifles possess a butt that can be used in this manner. Basic training often

requires soldiers to use the butt of a gun, thus the butt is considered a martial weapon. Rifle butts are solid pieces of wood or metal. While they deal less damage than a rifle wielded as a club, they suffer no possibility of bending the barrel.

Saber: By the year 1890 the saber is in its prime. The saber is an efficient weapon, a curved blade used for centuries by cavalymen. Officers in the infantry regularly carry these weapons, though they find little use for them. Most sabers not carried by cavalymen are actually ornamental weapons; they can do no damage and break on the first successful hit. Sabers are medium sized, martial melee weapons that can deal 1D8 slashing damage on a successful hit and threaten a critical range of 18-20/*2.

Sabers also offer a +1 circumstantial bonus to damage rolls made by mounted characters to attack unmounted foes, this is in addition to the +1 bonus to hit unmounted foes granted by the high ground. Sabers weigh three pounds and are martial weapons. The sabers used by cavalry are extremely expensive to manufacture, most of those in use are relics from past wars.

Scimitar: In the Ottoman Empire the scimitar is a symbolic weapon, just as the saber is to Western nations. The scimitar is used in war as a melee weapon, though it is rarely seen amongst armies with an adequate supply of bullets and rifles. The scimitar is a long curving blade that looks very similar to a saber. The blade deals 1D6 slashing damage and threatens a critical range of 18-20/*2. These blades weigh 4 pounds. Scimitars are medium sized, martial weapons. These swords are cheap to manufacture, thus they have flooded the

market. Few soldiers in the Ottoman Empire go without these blades, for in a skilled hand a scimitar easily outmatches a clumsy bayonet.

Shovel: The shovel is a far cry from a weapon of war, but in a moment of crisis a steel shovel can still split flesh as easily as soil. Shovels are large weapons, weighing six pounds. These items deal 1D6 bludgeoning and slashing damage on a successful hit and threatens a critical range of 20/*2. Shovels are two-handed weapons, thus the strength modifier to damage is increased to 150%. Shovels are considered simple weapons.

Missile Weapons

Civilian Rifle: The civilian rifle represents the many varieties of hunting rifles available to the common man. The basic civilian rifle is the Winchester repeating rifle. The lever action rifle weighs eight pounds, has a range increment of 150 feet, and carries an internal magazine of eight .30 rounds. Each successful shot deals 1D8 piercing damage and threatens a critical range of 20/*3. Civilian rifles are considered martial weapons, but proficiency in one brand of civilian rifle counts as proficiency in all civilian rifles.

Lebel M1886 Rifle: The Lebel has served as the main rifle of the French army since 1886. At the time the weapon was the first modern, mass produced weapon. Lebels are bolt action rifles, weigh nine pounds, have a range increment of 150 feet, and accept stripper clips of seven .30 rifle rounds. Each successful shot deals 1D10 piercing damage and threaten a critical

range of 20/*3. Lebel rifles are martial weapons.

Lee Enfield Rifle: The Lee Enfield is known around the world as the best overall battle rifle. The Enfield combines good stopping power with long range and reliability. The bolt action and stripper clip capacity allows soldiers to fire rapidly into oncoming enemies, minimizing the time expended by reloading and maximizing their time devoted to firing. The Enfield is a bolt-action rifle that weighs nine pounds, has a range increment of 200 feet and uses stripper clips of ten 9 mm bullets. Each successful hit deals 1D12 piercing damage and threatens a critical range of 20/*3. Lee Enfields are martial weapons.

Pistol, Army: The army pistol is a powerful revolver. The army pistol has a range increment of 30 feet and weights two and a half pounds. This weapon has a capacity to hold six 9mm bullets. Army pistols are powerful weapons; each bullet deals 1D12 piercing damage and threatens a critical range of 20/*3. The army pistol is a simple weapon.

Pistol, Civilian: Civilian pistols are all basically the same, despite individual features and brand names. Civilian pistols are 2 pound revolvers that have a ranged increment of 30 feet and magazine that can accept six 0.30 bullets. Each successful hit deals 1D8 piercing damage and threatens a critical range of 20/*3. Civilian pistols are simple weapons.

Pistol, Navy: The navy pistol is a simple but effective revolver. The navy pistol has a range increment of 30 feet and weights two pounds. This weapon has a

capacity to hold six .45 bullets. Navy pistols are powerful weapons; each bullet deals 1D10 piercing damage and threatens a critical range of 20/*3. The single action navy pistol is a simple weapon.

Shotgun: Shotguns are primarily hunting weapons but they can easily be used to take out human prey. Shotguns come in a wide variety of different models, there are repeating shotguns, double-barreled shotguns, and sawed-off shotguns of both types. All types of shotguns are martial weapons. Repeating shotguns use internal magazines capable of storing eight shells, they are operated by handle levers or by pump action.

Double-barreled shotguns may carry two shots, but must be reloaded after both shots are fired. A double-barreled shotgun might fire the shells as two different attacks or fire both shells with one attack. Double-barreled shotguns are breach loaded.

Both repeating shotguns and double-barreled shotguns have range increments of ten feet. Sawed off shotguns function as either double-barreled or repeating shotguns but use a range increment of five feet.

Shotgun shells do not function in the same way as regular bullets. Shells cannot reach beyond the fifth multiple of the range increment. Thus, a shell from a repeating shotgun cannot hit any target farther than fifty feet. Shells fire sprays of buckshot that expand in a conical shape, making it easier to hit targets.

Attacks against targets within the first range increment gain a +1 bonus, while attacks on targets within the second receive a +2 bonus, targets within the third receive a +3 bonus and a

+4 bonus is applied to attacks against targets within the fourth increment.

The base damage for a shotgun shell is 4D6, but this damage reduces as the shells disperse. Hits made against targets within the first increment deal full damage, but for each range increment beyond the first the damage lessens by one dice. For example, a target forty-five feet from a repeating shotgun suffers 1D6 damage. Shotgun shells threaten a critical range of 20/*3.

Shotguns can be loaded with special rounds known as slugs. These slugs function much like normal bullets, they do not expand like buckshot. Slugs deal 5D6 damage and can be fired beyond the fifth ranged increment, just like a normal bullet. Sawed off shotguns are not issued by any military; they must be specially made by a gunsmith. The DC of the check to correctly modify a shotgun into a sawed off gun is 10.



Ammunition Costs

Ammunition	Type	Cost	# Of rounds
.30	Box	\$0.20	25
.30	Stripper Clip	\$0.10	7
.45	Box	\$0.25	25
9 mm	Box	\$0.30	25
9 mm	Stripper Clip	\$0.10	10
Shotgun Shells	Box	\$0.30	25

Simple Weapons

Weapon	Size	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
Baton	Small	\$0.75	1D6	19-20/*2	-	2lbs	Bludg.
Club, Metal	Large	-	1D8	*2	-	10lbs	Bludg.
Club, wood	Large	-	1D6	*2	-	6lbs	Bludg
Pistol, Army	Small	\$3.50	1D12	*3	30ft	3lbs	Pierce
Pistol, Civilian	Small	\$2.00	1D8	*3	30ft	2lbs	Pierce
Pistol, Navy	Small	\$2.50	1D10	*3	30ft	2lbs	Pierce
Shovel	Large	\$1.00	1D6	*2	-	6lbs	Blud/slash

Marital Weapons

Weapon	Size	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
Bayonet	Small	\$2.00	1D6	19-20/*2	-	2lbs	Piercing
Civilian Rifle	Large	\$10.0	1D8	*3	150ft	10lbs	Piercing
Combat knife	Small	\$2.00	1D4	19-20/*2	10	2lbs	Pierc/slash
Lebel Rifle	Large	\$12.5	1D10	*3	150ft	10lbs	Piercing
Lee Enfield Rifle	Large	\$15.0	1D12	*3	200ft	11lbs	Piercing
Rifle Butt	Large	-	1D4	*2	-	-	Bludg.
Sabre	Med	\$17.0	1D8	18-20/*2	-	6lbs	Slashing
Scimitar	Med	\$12.0	1D6	18-20/*2	-	6lbs	Slashing
Shotgun	Large	\$3.00	4D6	*3	10ft	10 lbs	Piercing
Sawed off Shotgun	Large	\$4.00	4D6	*3	5ft	10 lbs	Piercing

Exotic Weapons

Weapon	Size	Cost	Damage	Critical	Range Increment	Weight	Type
Garrotte	Small	\$1.00	1D6	18-20/*3	-	1lbs	-
Hatchet	Small	\$1.00	1D6	*3	10ft	4 lbs	Slashing
Hammer	Small	\$.50	1D4	*2	10ft	2 lbs	Bludg.
Rapier	Med.	\$15.0	1D6	18-19/*2	-	3 lbs	Piercing
Sledge Hammer	Large	\$2.50	1D8	*3	-	12 lbs	Bludg.
Two handed axe	Large	\$2.50	1D8	*3	-	10 lbs	Slashing

From the Lab

The Eraser

As Wilhelm Roentgen conducted his experiments with X rays, he and his lab staff began to report a strange phenomenon. The laboratory personnel experienced “lost time”, periods of their time in the lab where they could recall nothing. Professor Andrew Nesia, an associate of Roentgen conducted his own experiments to determine the origin of this “lost time”. By recreating the X-ray experiments, Nesia discovered that instantaneous exposure to a particular frequency of X-radiation generated the “lost time” effect.

To further explore the process of this lost time, Nesia created a device to generate momentary bursts of X-radiation, creating a reaction the professor dubbed “the flash”. Early experiments on animals and humans revealed that this flash generated a period of lost time beginning with the moment of flash and extending back roughly one hour in time. The memories of this period were completely eradicated and irretrievable even by hypnosis. Nesia nicknamed his new device “the eraser” and hoped to use the device to conduct experiments into both radiation and neurology.

Unbeknownst to Nesia, one of his laboratory assistants had made other plans for the eraser. Recognizing the usefulness of the eraser, the assistant stole the design and turned the device

upon its creator. Since that incident, Nesia has refused to create another such device. The eraser has since fallen into the hands of at least one qabal.

The eraser is a small box, shaped somewhat like a camera. A small lens extends from the front of the box and two handles adorn the back. A trigger mechanism is built into one of the handles. The eraser is powered by a small piece of radioactive material, which has been refined and focused with a lens to produce radiation at a certain frequency. The eraser is considered a futuristic technology.

Utilized the eraser requires the user to take a full action to point the device in the general direction of a target and depressing the trigger. Once activated, the eraser creates a flash similar to a gaze attack. Anyone in front of the device must make a will save against a DC 15 to resist the effects of the flash. The user of the eraser is immune to the flash. Anyone who fails their save is stunned for one minute and may not take any actions. A character thus stunned immediately forgets all events from the moment of the flash to as far back as one hour previous to the flash. For so long as the victim is stunned, he is rendered highly susceptible to persuasion. While stunned, a character suffers a –10 penalty to sense motive checks made to oppose bluff checks.

Credits

Contributors

Andrew Snow aka MDSnowman, SnowSyracuse@aol.com. Creator of The Human Morningstar. Andrew Snow is a struggling senior English major at Syracuse University. He spends most of his free time huddled in front of a computer screen laughing manically and planning what he claims will be an amazing Ravenloft campaign. He constantly claims that all he needs is three solid weeks, four books that haven't been released yet and players who aren't intimidated by his fiendish laughter.

Asbjørn Flø aka Malken/Ezekiel aflo@online.no. Provided cover picture. Asbjørn Flø (Malken/Ezekiel), (Smart 2/Dedicated 1): CR 3; Medium-size human (DM) HD 2d6+2+1d6+1 HP 19; Mas 13; Init -2; Spd 30; Defense 8; touch 8, flat-footed 8; BAB +0; Grap +1 Atk +1 melee (1d3+1, Players Handbook), or -2 ranged (1 nonlethal, Pelt you with Polyhedric Die); Al: Good, (I think), Self, Friends. SV Fort +2, Ref -2, Will +4; AP 6; Rep +0; Str 13, Dex 7, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 11, Cha 15. Starting Occupation: Student (Knowledge (Art), Research)
Skills: Computer Use +9(5), Craft (Visual Art) +9(5), Craft (Writing) +7(5), Forgery +6(4), Knowledge (Art) +10(5), Knowledge (Current Events) +6(4), Knowledge (Earth and life sciences) +7(5), Knowledge (History) +9(5), Knowledge (Theology & Philosophy) +9 (5), Profession +5(5), R/W German, English, Research +7(5), Speak German, Speak English, Survival

+2(2), Treat Injury +3(3) Feats: Low Profile, Studious, Guide, Educated (History, Theology and Philosophy) Simple Weapon; Talents: Savant (Computer Use, Visual Art), Skill Emphasis (Knowledge(Art))
Possessions: A worn and torn handbag, a lot of D&D equipment, a Discman, polyhedric die, pen, pencil and brushes.

David Gibson aka The Jester jester.canuk@hotmail.com. Creator of Creeplings, Fidgets, and Crawlers. Repeatedly the token Canadian and Ravenloft fan since the Red Box (which was bought less than a year after being introduced to gaming in general). It's been a long road filled with many, many crappy ideas and bad adventures. Hopefully there have been a few improvements. The 3E van Richten is dedicated to anyone who has spent the better part of a week updating a character over and over, fixing uncountable mistakes and errors.

Joseph Zettelmaier Aka Bela zetelmaier@aol.com. Author of The Price of Admission and creator of the Freak Show. Joseph (Bela) Zettelmaier is a professional actor/playwright/stage manager/fight choreographer living in Michigan. He's been a raging Ravenloft fan for over ten years, when first introduced to the Black Box set. Thanks to Carolyn, Henry, Jason S. & especially Jason T. for keeping the fires burning.

Henry Eshleman aka Cole Deschain transmetropolitan@mailcity.com. Creator of The Sideshow. Henry Eshleman, who is an Alaskan, currently

endures Indiana as he slogs through college. When not whining needlessly, he spends his time working towards his degree in theatre. He frequents the Malodorous Goat, where he manages to waste time on the Halfling Walks, Ebon Gargoyles, and Galen Saga. This marks his first contribution to anything in any meaningful form. Thanks to Jason, Carolyn, and Joe... They know why.

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Dmitri Zorin MalVil@rambler.ru
Creator of Delirious Nocturne. Dmitri Zorin. I was born in 1983, Moscow, Russia and has been being a student of Moscow Institute of Radio, Electronics and Automatics (MIREA) of late. Been playing D&D since approximately 1996-97, entered the mists in 1998. Enjoy gothic fiction, movies and jungle music. Favourite writers: J.R.R. Tolkien, H.P. Lovecraft, B. Stoker, R.A. Salvatore and Ed Greenwood (yes, I play Forgotten Realms too). I must admit, obvious problems of entering the adult's life (like that of the necessity to work) have been taking a toll on me lately and, regrettably, I've lost some touch with my

favourite hobby... A mistake I intend to correct.

Editors

Jason True aka Javier
xaos313@hotmail.com. Creator of "Twist and Shout" and the Carnival Performer. With the possible exception of Planescape, Ravenloft has been my favorite setting to both play in and DM. These particular tastes in campaign settings probably explain why I have a tendency to use various fiends in Ravenloft and have a gothic mood in many of my Planescape adventures. When I'm not brainstorming for new adventure ideas, my time is typically spent between finishing my medical degree and helping plan my wedding. In fact, I would like to dedicate this to my fiancée, Renee, who has been both patient and understanding of all my role-playing interests.

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