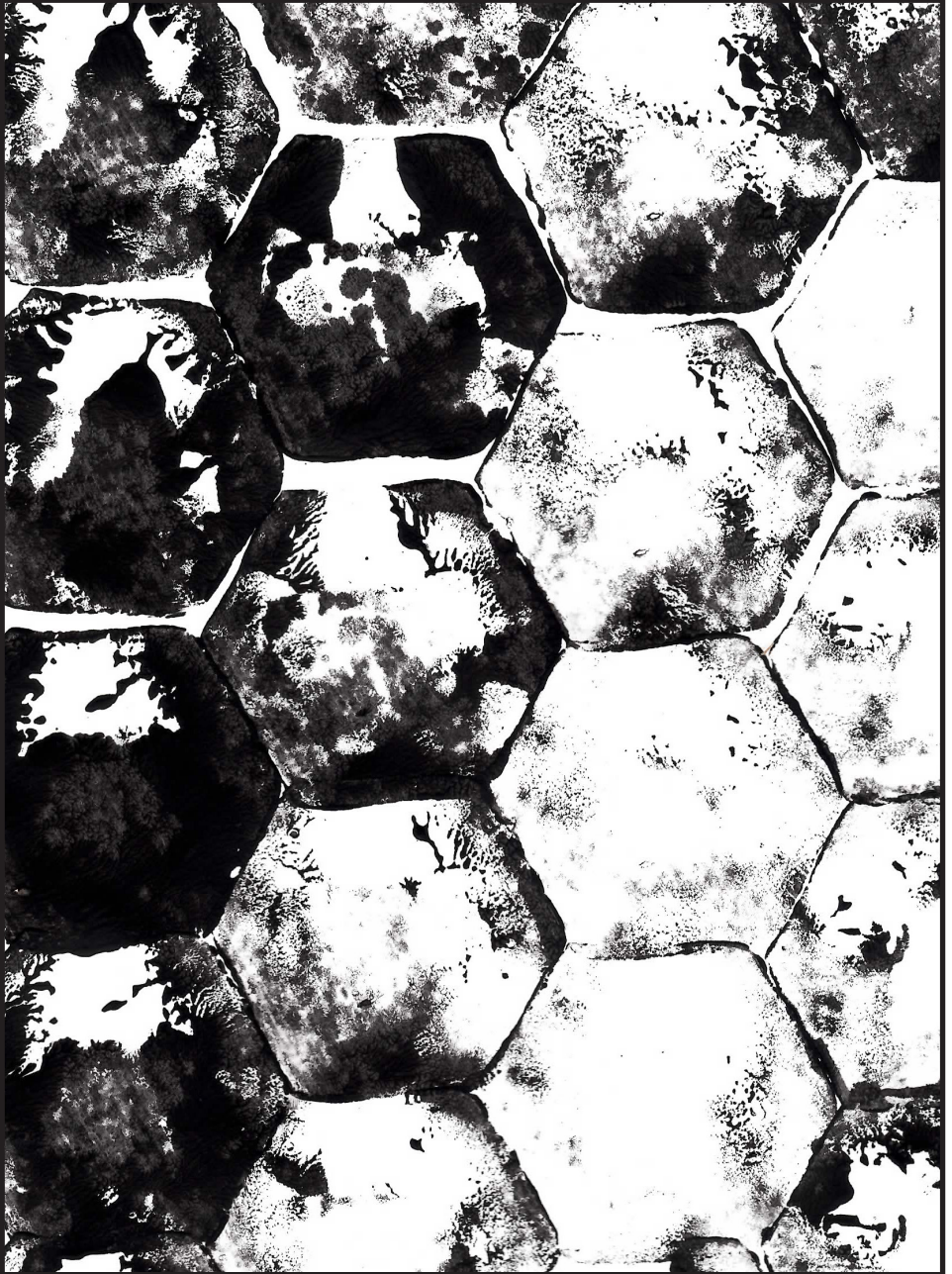


RED MOON MEDICINE SHOW PRESENTS:

VACANT RITUAL ASSEMBLY

AN OSR ZINE - ISSUE #1 - WINTER 2014



INTRODUCING

Welcome to VRA #1. The goal here is simple. I'm running a (mostly) weekly *Lamentations of the Flame Princess* campaign and I end up developing a lot of new material for that campaign. Rather than let it gather dust somewhere when I'm done, I'm going to publish it here so that someone else out there might be able to use some of it. I'm planning for each issue to have at least one complete adventure and at least one interview with someone interesting.

CONTENTS

The **Evangelism** section (pg 2) contains a potpourri of media recommendations that I've found inspirational for gaming.

The **Ghoul Market** (pgs 3-4) was created as an attempt to fix the metagame economy of my campaign. One problem that I perceive with *LotFP* as written is that the characters have fuck all to spend their money on once they hit a certain tipping point. The Ghoul Market is meant to allow for a thematically appropriate way for players to purchase magic items and thus drain tons of money from the metagame economy.

Meat the Skinsmith (pgs 5-6) introduces a few new player options and what I would consider an *LotFP* compatible take on character resurrection.

Vespero the Antiquarian (pgs 7-9) is the centerpiece of my whole campaign and the most common way for my low-level PCs to interface with the Ghoul Market.

Luminari, the Lady of the Golden Lamp (pg 10) is a creepy firefly goddess that came up in my game.

Brahnwick is Dead (11-16) is a single-session adventure that I've run a couple of times. It was inspired by an article I read about how medieval people thought madness was contagious.

Into the Odd with Chris McDowall (17-20) is an interview I conducted with the creator of *Into The Odd* about the project, his creative process, and stuff like that.

Greycandle Manor (21-22) my players bought an old, creepy manor on the outskirts of town. This is the handout I made for them to fill out. You could also stock it with monsters and use it as an adventure site.

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ABOUT MY CAMPAIGN

I'm running *LotFP* with the following house rules:

- We only use the 4 main classes (Cleric, Fighter, Magic User, Specialist). Demihumans are playable, but demihumaness is mostly cosmetic.
- Crits (natural 20s) inflict maximum damage of weapon.
- Each time you critically fail an attack roll (natural 1), your weapon gains a Notch. At 3 Notches, your weapon breaks. When you suffer a critical hit (natural 20) your shield or armor (in that order) gains a notch. These also break when they accumulate 3 notches. Each Notch can be repaired for 1/3 the total cost of the item. This is a variant of a house rule by Logan Knight over at lastgaspgrimoire.com.
- We ignore the thing about randomly choosing targets when firing into combat.
- No limit on amount of experience earned per adventure.

LEGAL CRAP

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EVANGELISM

FILM

As Above, So Below - Not the best movie by any means, but I loved it anyway. It does a great job depicting the claustrophobia and mystery of a dungeon crawl. Highly recommended for dungeony GMs.

MUSIC

Hexvessel, *No Holier Temple* - Doomy, psychedelic, neo-folk, occultic forest music. This album inspired a lot of my game writing this year.

Giant Squid, *Minoans* - Apocalyptic doom metal concept album about the demise of the Minoan civilization on the island of Crete.

COMICS

Sovereign by Chris Roberson and Paul Maybury/Image Comics - Fun D&D-esque comic with a lot of really cool worldbuilding (neat take on Paladins in particular).

RPG STUFF

The Sleeping Place of the Feathered Swine by Logan Knight - A wonderfully disgusting, single-session cave crawl. It's pay-what-you-want over on drivethrurpg.com, but it's worth at least \$5.

Deep Carbon Observatory by Patrick Stuart and Scrap Princess - This is the most exciting D&D module I've read since the early *LotFP* stuff. Very inspiring.

THE GHOUL MARKET

Beneath a defiled chapel, the scavengers of the dead emerge from their tunnels to barter with the living and the damned. Inhuman travelers peruse black-shrouded stalls and dine on artisanal cadavers. Dirgists sell omens and fortunes. Shackled beasts yowl and bastard children sob.

GAINING ENTRY

Over countless centuries, the Ghouls have built a complex series of tunnels that are believed to connect all the world's burial grounds. Almost any cemetery of significant size will contain a passage to the Ghoul Market. The mark of the White Ankh on a tomb or mausoleum indicates that the edifice serves as a gateway. Upon entering, the traveler will find themselves entering the market through its main gate. Exiting the market sends the traveler back from whence they came.

Mortals who enter the ghoul market are likely to be assailed by a hungry marketgoer unless they possess Writ of Sanctuary from Viscount Madrigal (my campaign's version of Count Dracula), which grants the bearer diplomatic protection inside the market.

GHOULISH TRANSACTIONS

Ghoul market merchants typically trade in both coins and "essence."

"Essence" (ability points) are exchanged at a rate of 1 per 250 sp. Players will jump at the chance to offload their excess CHA points, and that's fine really.

Beauty and charm are rare delicacies to Ghoul Market patrons.



MAGIC ITEMS

In general, 1D10 random magic items will be available during any given visit to the Ghoul Market. A magic item generally costs 1000-6000sp. In my campaign I generate magic items randomly using the incredibly comprehensive tables in *Dragon Magazine* #217 (seek it out) and *Diablo II: Diablarie* by Wizards of the Coast. When I don't know the "official" effect of an item I just make it up based on the name. In typical LotFP fashion I give many items interesting and/or terrible consequences for use.

THE SKINSMITH

The Skinsmith is one of the prime fixtures of the ghoul market. See page 5 for more details on the services he provides.

TYPICAL GHOUL Armor 14, HD 3, HP 15, Move 120', Bite 1d6 damage plus paralysis (Save vs. Paralyze or totally paralyzed for 1d4 rounds), Morale 10.

THE BEASTWRACK

The Beastwrack is a whip-wielding spider demon who captures and breeds unusual beasts of burden. 1D4-2 of each available per visit.

Wind Whales: Magical flying whales the size of horses. 2000sp.

Ergoraptors: Ostrich-like mounts (think *Joust*). Can fly in short bursts. Faster than a horse. 1000sp.

Hovelshells: Giant turtles whose shells have been fashioned into a small dwelling/cargo space. Tough but slow. 2000sp.

THE DIRGISTS

Dirgists are pale-skinned, four-armed bards who fill the air of the market with the constant melancholy drone of their marrow pipes (super-dissonant bagpipes made of ghoul bones). Off-duty dirgists are known for selling omens and fortunes, imparting the wisdom they gleaned during their droning trance (for a price). A dirgist's fortune telling session costs 50sp. I use the table on page 56 of *Vornheim* by Zak Smith to generate the fortune.

SLAVES

All manner of slaves are sold at the Ghoul Market, the most common being mindless undead creatures and bastard children. 1D4-1 slaves of each type are available per visit.

- Bastard Child Slave 20 sp
- Undead Slave (1 HD) 50 sp
- Undead Slave (2 HD) 100 sp

FAIRY AMBER

Long ago, the wild places of the world played host to multitudes of fair folk. Many of these magical creatures met their demise stuck in the sap of a tree and, eventually, encased in amber. Orbs of fairy amber are greatly prized in the Ghoul Market. They are typically embedded into weapons and armor to imbue them with magical potency.

1D4-1 pieces of fairy amber are available per visit to the Ghoul Market. Each costs 3,000sp. If embedded into a weapon, the weapon gains +1 to hit and damage. If embedded into armor, the armor gains +1 AC.

Multiple pieces of fairy amber can be embedded into the same item (the effects are cumulative), but each time an additional piece is added you must roll a d10. If the result is equal or less than the total number of fairy ambers embedded into the item, all of them lose their magical potency due to the competing energies of the trapped creatures.



A MEET THE SKINSMITH

FLESH CRIMES

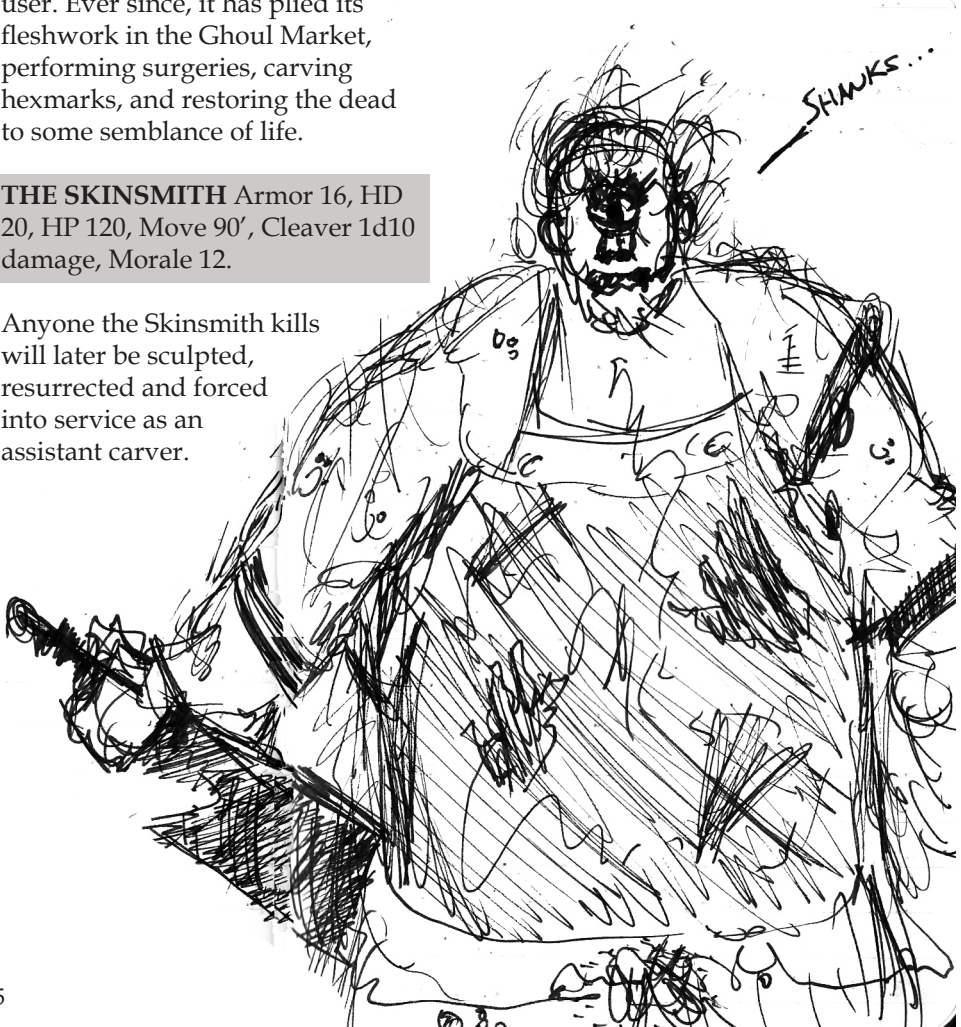
The Skinsmith offers a variety of services and will greedily accept essence in lieu of coin.

The Skinsmith is a corpulent, cyclopean demon. For untold centuries it labored in Hell, sculpting pleasure steeds in the flayed gardens of Baal-keth. The Skinsmith escaped the infernal pits when it was inadvertently summoned by a foolish magic-user. Ever since, it has plied its fleshwork in the Ghoulish Market, performing surgeries, carving hexmarks, and restoring the dead to some semblance of life.

THE SKINSMITH Armor 16, HD 20, HP 120, Move 90', Cleaver 1d10 damage, Morale 12.

Anyone the Skinsmith kills will later be sculpted, resurrected and forced into service as an assistant carver.

Resurrection of the Dead: The Skinsmith can restore mortals to life for 5000sp. The body must be present. The Skinsmith is an artist at heart. It approaches each resurrection as a sculptor would approach a block of stone. Anyone resurrected in this way rolls once on the *Grim Alterations* table.



Replacement/Additional Limbs:

The Skinsmith will replace missing limbs or add additional limbs for $d6 \times 100sp$ per appendage.

Carving Hexmarks: Hexmarks are magical tattoos, near-complete thoughtforms engraved into the subject's flesh. The client must present the Skinsmith with a scroll, spellbook, or equivalent containing the desired spell. Hexmarks cost Spell Level $\times 2000sp$ and take 1 hour per spell level to inscribe. Once tatted, the user can cast the tattooed spell once per day as if it were a regularly prepared spell OR it can be cast twice, but upon the second casting the spellbrand is burned from the user's flesh causing $1d4$ damage and permanently removing its potency. No previous spellcasting ability is needed to make use of a hexmark. *Cleric spells cannot be turned into hexmarks.*

Preparing Artisanal Cadavers:

Many patrons of the Ghoul Market have an appetite for human and demihuman flesh. If one wishes to bribe or befriend such a creature, the Skinsmith can help. These are his most popular preparations:

- Spiced Man $1d4 \times 10sp$
- Cronetoe Stew $1d4 \times 10sp$
- Bruised Loin Soup $1d4 \times 10sp$
- Dwarf Jerky $1d4 \times 10sp$
- Bardthroat Fillet $1d4 \times 100sp$
- Spiced Girl $1d4 \times 100sp$
- Pickled Infant $1d4 \times 100sp$
- Elf Shanks $1d4 \times 250sp$
- Halfling Foie Gras $1d4 \times 250sp$
- Wizard's Brain $1d4 \times 250sp$

GRIM ALTERATIONS (D12)

- 1: Head replaced with a bull's.
- 2: Head replaced with a jackal's.
- 3: Head replaced with a goat's.
- 4: Eyes replaced with mouths. Mouth replaced with a cyclopean eye.
- 5: Skin is covered in patches of non-functioning genitalia (+1 AC)
- 6: Palm of hand forms a demonic face that talks and wants the host to suffer.
- 7: Entire body covered in large, thorny protrusions. Sitting down causes immense pain. Unarmed attacks do $1d4$ damage.
- 8: Four rotting, semi-functional angel wings are attached at the back.
- 9: Internal "pockets" are installed in place of non-vital organs. $1d6$ small (non-encumbering) items can be stored within.
- 10: Head is crowned with giant demonic horns.
- 11: $1d3$ babbling heads are attached to the shoulders and/or neck.
- 12: Flesh is bursting at the seams due to an injection of demonic fat cells. Movement rates halved. Each time you suffer physical damage, increase it by 1.

VESPERO THE ANTIQUARIAN

Little is known about Vespero the Antiquarian. He is a quiet, sickly man who runs the inconspicuous curiosity shoppe at the end of the row. He travels far and often, consulting with inhuman entities and, worse, city folk.

Vespero wears the accoutrements of a plague doctor at all times, long black robe, beaked mask, and shoulder-mounted censers, constantly burning incense (Vespero's associates insist that the scents change with his moods). Beneath this imposing facade is a frail, sickly man, perpetually malnourished and horribly marked by his dealings with malign entities.

Vespero is a fixer of sorts. He works with wealthy clients to acquire rare and exotic items that feed their curious and decadent interests. Upon finding such a client Vespero will seek out adventurers, outlaws, and tomb robbers to recover the item(s) in question. His arrangement is quite generous. Contractors are given 100 percent finder's rights to any superfluous treasure found during the acquisition plus a generous fee paid for the recovery of the item in question. Vespero also tracks down the approximate location of the item so that all that remains is the actual recovery operation.

Vespero also provides the following services from his curiosity shoppe:

- Vespero's presence means that the settlement counts as a city for the purpose of acquiring city-exclusive items. (LotFP)
- Vespero will identify magic items for free.
- Each session, Vespero will stock 1d4 random **magic items** "fresh from the Ghoul Market." Generate an entirely new inventory of items each session. Any items not purchased by the PCs will be sold to someone else.
- Each session Vespero will stock 1d6 **restorative elixirs**. Each heals 1d6+1 HP when quaffed. These sell for 500sp each.
- Each session Vespero will stock 1d8 **strange baubles**. These are interesting and unusual items of questionable usefulness. I've used the "trinkets" table from the D&D5e PHB to stock these items, but you could just make up a few yourself. These usually cost around 1d6x100sp.

Note: Each session I prepare the handout on page 9 and give it to my players. Feel free to print/ photocopy it for your own purposes.



SMP



Fresh from the Ghoul Market . . .

In addition, _____ restorative elixirs are available for 500sp each.

Perusal of the back room reveals numerous strange baubles . . .

LUMINARI, LADY OF THE GOLDEN LAMP



Deep in the woods dwells an ancient goddess, Luminari, the Lady of the Golden Lamp. She appears as a great firefly with six slender human arms extending from her glowing abdomen.

Wise travelers say that the easiest way to find the heart of the forest is to travel by night and follow Luminari's fire, which can often be seen glowing above the trees.

THE LAMP MAIDENS

Luminari is served by the lamp maidens, young women clad only in gauzy scarves, who sleep by day and exalt Luminari by night, mimicking the spiral dance of the fireflies, and preparing bowls of honeymilk for the goddess to drink. Lamp Maidens are chosen from among the young girls of the surrounding villages. Once chosen, the girl must leave her family and devote herself entirely to the service of Luminari. When a lamp maiden dies, the sisterhood erects a pyre under the stars. At the fire's climax, Luminari descends from the sky, extends her long proboscis and drinks the flame. Through this ritual, Luminari's eternal glow is sustained perpetually.

LUMINARI'S BLESSING

When a traveler has sufficiently pleased Luminari, usually by leaving her trailside offerings of honeymilk or giving aid to her lamp maidens, she will place a blessing upon the traveler's sources of light. Torches, lamps, and lanterns belonging to the blessed character will never go out because of wind, rain, or other environmental effects. They can otherwise be smothered and extinguished normally.

IN MY CAMPAIGN

Luminari started out as an improvised random encounter when the PCs were traveling through a forest to get to the *Sleeping Place of the Feathered Swine*. I had offhandedly described the forest as being thick with fireflies by night. On the next encounter (a session or two later) they saw a group of lamp maidens feeding Luminari her honeymilk, then saw the goddess hover overhead like a UFO. Finally, they received Luminari's blessing when they gave the proper funeral rites to a maiden who had been killed by a pack of murderous boar men.

LUMINARI Armor 16, HD 15, HP 45, Move 240' (flying), No physical attacks, Can cast *Dispel Evil*, *Faerie Fire*, and *Remove Fear* at will, Morale 10.

BRAHNWICK IS DEAD

I've run this adventure twice now and both times it's been a single session affair. In my most recent game, Vespero hired the PCs to recover Brahnwick's signet ring (found in area 16) for one of his clients (who needed it to solve a succession conflict in a nearby barony). Photocopy/print the map on the facing page and give it to the players when they arrive. This represents the information they can glean just by looking around.

BACKGROUND

The village of Sylvan Lake was once the seat of power for Lord Brahnwick. An ancient stone dam separated the village from the nearby lake, which the locals used for fishing. All was well in Sylvan Lake until 2 years ago when the mad inmates of the House of Mercy escaped one night. They raved through the village spreading the contagion of insanity. By the end of the night, half the village was mad and a mob formed to "liberate" it from the "constraints" of the dam. In a few hours the structure was compromised and the town flooded. Those who weren't dead or insane fled. The mad stormed Brahnwick's keep and strangled him with a stocking. They've had the run of the flooded town since.

RUMORS (d4)

- 1- Sylvan Lake was overthrown by madmen 2 years ago.
- 2- Sylvan Lake is a cursed place, haunted by the tormented spirits of those who drowned there.
- 3- There's a monster in that lake.
- 4- Lord Brahnwick hoarded wealth in the cellar of his keep.

WANDERING MONSTERS

Check for wandering monsters once every turn (10 minutes). Roll a d6. On a 1, roll on the wandering monster table below:

Wandering Monsters (1d6):

- 1-3: The Lake Monster
- 4-6: 2d6 Madfolk

MADFOLK Armor 12, Move 120', HD1, HP3, Scavenged Weapon 1d6 damage, Morale 5.

Anyone damaged by the madfolk must Save vs. Poison or suffer 1d6 temporary Wisdom damage. If the victim's Wisdom is reduced below 3, they join the Madfolk.

LAKE MONSTER Armor 16, Move 120' (in water), HD6, HP36, Bite 1d8 damage, Morale 10.

Every time the lake monster comes into the flooded town, the windmill (area 7) begins to turn on its own.

If the lake monster is reduced to half HP it will attempt to retreat to its lair and attack again later.

Sylvan Lake

Keep

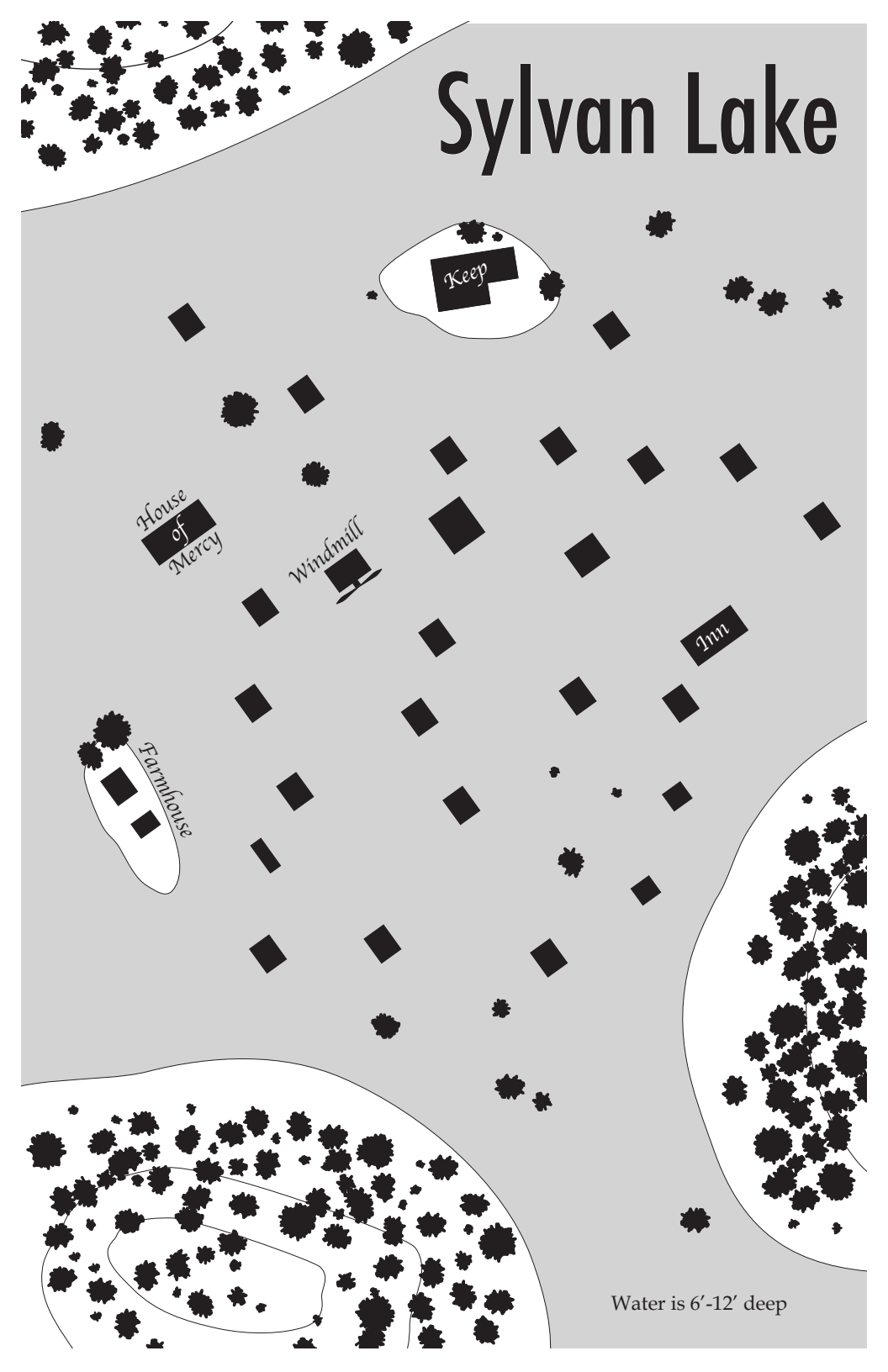
House
of
Mercy

Windmill

Inn

Farmhouse

Water is 6'-12' deep



Sylvan Lake

Keep
10

House
6 of
Mercy

Windmill
7

8

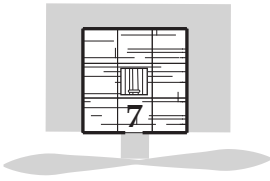
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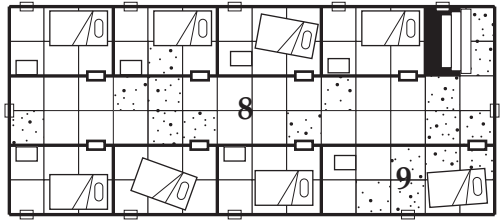
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Water is 6'-12' deep

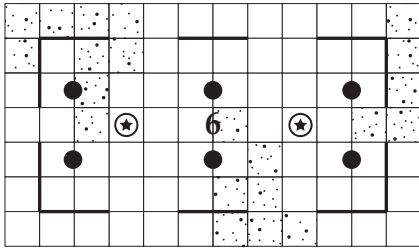
WINDMILL LOFT



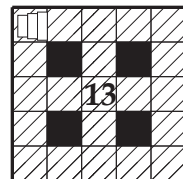
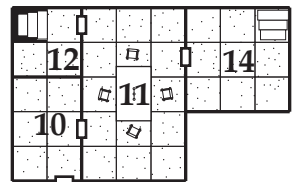
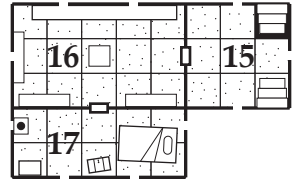
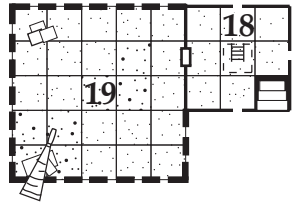
INN (2ND FLOOR)



HOUSE OF MERCY (ROOF)

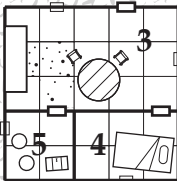


KEEP

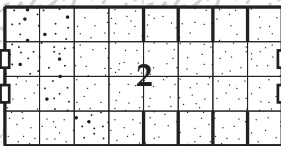


CELLAR

FARMHOUSE



BARN



MAP KEY

1. The Quiet Man

A simple row boat sits on the bank here. **The Quiet Man** is preparing to row out into the ruins. He's been looting the drowned corpse of Sylvan Lake for several months. He generally makes camp near area 1, rows around in his boat and salvages any useful or valuable junk he can find. He's never entered the keep or the House of Mercy (he's afraid of them) and he leaves any time the windmill moves. So far he's managed to keep the madfolk at bay by firing his flintlock into the air when they come near.

THE QUIET MAN Armor 14, Move 120', HD2, HP6, Flintlock Pistol d8 damage (ignore 5 AC), Crab Claw d4 damage, Morale 8.

The quiet man is totally mute (his tongue was removed for a crime he committed as a child). His deformed right hand resembles a large, chitinous crab claw.

2. Barn

A dead man hangs from a noose tied to the rafters of this abandoned barn. As soon as the PCs look away, even for a moment he vanishes along with the rope.

3. Front Room

This room contains a simple wooden table, a pair of wooden chairs, and a brick fireplace. Above the fireplace hangs a flintlock musket (d8 damage, ignore 5 AC).

4. Bedroom

This room contains a simple wooden bed. Someone has scrawled "Into the eyes of the mad" on the wall in human blood.

5. Storeroom

There are two empty wooden barrels here. An unlocked wooden chest on the floor contains 89cp, 23sp, and 1gp.

6. House of Mercy

Only the roof of this stone structure is visible above the water line. Beautifully carved stone archways open to a rooftop courtyard. Inside are six marble columns and two statues of maidens holding flowers. Two half-submerged stairways descend into the flooded structure below.

2d6 **Madfolk** are here at any given time. They alternate between keeping watch, wandering aimlessly, and soliloquizing to an unseen audience.

MADFOLK Armor 12, Move 120', HD1, HP3, Scavenged Weapon 1d6 damage, Morale 5.

Anyone damaged by the Madfolk must Save vs. Poison or take 1d6 temporary Wisdom damage. If Wisdom is reduced below 3, the victim joins the Madfolk.

7. Windmill Loft

Inside the windmill is a small loft 6' above the water line and directly under the sails. A trap door in the floor leads to the flooded mill below.

8. Inn (2nd Floor)

A dozen dead fish can be seen floating in the water around this structure. The fish appear to have been pierced by crossbow bolts. Inside, the inn's guest rooms are abandoned and disheveled. One has a set of skeletal remains with the tip of a dagger broken off in its spine. Another contains 18sp scattered across the floor. A flooded staircase leads to the submerged common room below. Anyone bold enough to dive might find the till on the floor behind the bar, which still holds 275sp.

9. Old Molly Archer

Old Molly Archer is huddled here, a hungry, naked old woman with a crossbow and a reckless bloodlust. Molly's been sniping fish from the window of the room, but if she hears outsiders approaching, she'll turn her crossbow on them.

OLD MOLLY ARCHER Armor 12, Move 120', HD1, HP4, Light Crossbow d6 damage (attack every 2 rounds, ignore 2 AC), Morale 7.

10. Keep Entryway

The front door is ajar. Someone has scrawled "Brahnwick is Dead" on the wall in human blood.

11. Dining Room

4 wooden chairs surround a rectangular wooden table.

12. Pantry

Empty except for a trap door with stairs leading to area 13.

13. Cellar

This dank chamber is flooded with 4" of water. In the southeast corner there are 3 waterlogged wooden chests. Two are empty, one is locked, and holds 1244sp.

14. Tower (1st Floor)

The southern wall holds an empty weapon rack. The stairs climb to area 15.

15. Tower (2nd Floor)

Stairs lead down to area 14 and up to area 18.

16. Brahnwick's Study

This study is lined with empty bookshelves. A strange globe depicting an unknown world is in the center of the room. Near this lie the skeletal remains of Lord Brahnwick, signet ring (200sp) still around his right ring finger.

17. Bedroom

The bed here is recently used and soiled. Against the wall, a locked strongbox contains 392sp.

18. Tower (3rd Floor)

Stairs to area 15. Ladder to area 20.

19. Ramparts

Leaning over the southern battlement there is a very large horn fashioned from scrap metal. Blowing this will call forth the Lake Monster.

20. Tower Roof

This perch provides a view of the entire town.

Into the Odd With Chris McDowall

Over on Google Plus I've been following Chris McDowall's *Into the Odd* project with great interest for several months now. It looks like a cool game in-and-of itself, but it also seems to have a lot of OSR-portable bits that I can snag for my campaign. I decided to sit down with Chris over a virtual cup of coffee and find out more:

CK: So, what's *Into the Odd* all about?

CM: *Into the Odd* is a rules-light game of exploration, horror, and survival. You play explorers from Bastion, the lone industrial city on a continent warped by centuries of alien interference. You're searching for Arcana, devices left by cosmic visitors that each possess a weird power of their own. Best of all, *Into the Odd* is a game that you can open up, roll characters, explain how to play, and be adventuring within five minutes.

CK: From what I've seen online, I think an obvious comparison could be made to *Lamentations of the Flame Princess*. How is *Into the Odd* different?

CM: *Into the Odd* has the same origins in Basic D&D, but I've stripped things back much further. Characters fit on the back of a business card, there's no rolling to hit, no preparing spells, and no skill system. Those things work great in D&D, but I wanted a game that kept players focused on the choices their characters have to make, rather than thinking about the rules.

All of this comes back to the focus on horror and exploration. Other than rolling damage when you attack, the only type of roll you'll make is a Saving Throw, and that only happens when you're taking a risk or did something stupid. You've got to rely on your wits, and if you make a bad choice, your character sheet isn't going to save you.

This isn't just for the benefit of the players. The Referee has a much smaller set of mechanics to deal with, and is guided in how to use these mechanics. The intent was for me to create a game that has the scope of B/X D&D with rules closer to the one-page games like *Searchers of the Unknown*.

CK: Can your desire to make this be traced back to an inspirational singularity?

CM: Playing *Searchers of the Unknown* got me to thinking what I really enjoy about D&D. It isn't the spell lists, creating a powerful character, or engaging in tactical combat.



It's the sense of exploration, the idea that you can come up with any crazy plan for how to survive, and the fact that you never know what's around the corner. If a one-page system could still hit all these notes for me, why was I wrestling with hundreds of pages of rules when I played other games?

But even when I was a kid playing the Heroquest boardgame, before I even knew about D&D, I loved taking the tiny set of rules you were given and twisting them to make the game feel completely different. In particular I remember adding an invincible grim-reaper monster that the adventurers had no way of harming. I was a Killer DM before I even knew what that term meant!

While *Into the Odd* started as a minimalist approach to Basic D&D, I soon edged further into focusing on survival horror. With so little emphasis on mechanics, your choices hold a lot of weight. What better way to make these choices interesting than to make them horrifying? With a focus on horror, I wanted to move away from the medieval and renaissance feel that seems to dominate fantasy settings, and to a more modern era that would be easier to relate to, making the weird, elements feel even stranger. Moving the setting to an industrial era and giving the supernatural elements a cosmic feel, rather than magical, gave me the groundwork for the setting that's grown around the game.

CK: Can you talk a bit about your approach to world building?

CM: For me, a setting has to serve the game, not the other way around. The world description started as a standard setting bible with multiple nations, cities, and key figures, but I soon stripped it back to a few key elements. Bastion is the largest city in the world, it sits on an underground network of caves and tunnels, and outside the city its either backwards deep country or unexplored strangeness. Just as with rules, if something isn't contributing to the core ideas of the game, it's cut.

CK: What's the coolest thing you've cut?

CM: I'm very happy with cutting equipment shopping for new characters. It can be such a daunting process that I decided to assign equipment based on your ability score and hitpoint rolls. It's also a subtle balancing mechanism. Roll great scores and you may lose an eye or be a penniless pauper. Roll terrible scores and you might get an elephant gun or psychic power to soften the blow. It's another place to sneak in bits of the setting too. The fact that you can start with an iron hand or a telepathic dog tells you something about the world your character lives in.

CK: Would you say that any of these mechanics are portable to other D&D-based systems?

CM: The beauty of what's happening online with the DIY D&D community is that people are taking chunks of all different games and creating their own systems of choice. *Into the Odd* is no different, and I could easily see someone taking the character creation, or Arcana, or mass combat rules to another system of their choice.

Similarly, I wanted it to be really easy to plug in content from other games. Because things work with a minimum of rules, it should be easy enough to bring in monsters from *5th Edition D&D*, characters from *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplaying*, or derelict spaceships from *Stars Without Number*.

CK: You're currently working on an *Oddpendium*?

CM: The *Oddpendium* is really where I promised myself I could cut loose after having such a restrained and minimalist approach to the core game. It's just a pile of random tables and optional character types that you can use in your game. Everything from random lost islands and star cults, to one of my favourites, the "I Drink The Stuff!" table. A lot of how I see the setting is injected into these tables, so it should be handy for anyone wanting a more fleshed out world.

This was all intended to be a separate release, but I've recently decided to include it as an additional chapter of the core

game. Every Referee that picks up *Into the Odd* is going to have a set of tables in the back to help them out of a tricky corner.

CK: In a perfect world, where all ambitions manifest without complication, where do you see *Into the Odd* in 5 years?

CM: The dream is an RPG to find a place alongside *Monopoly* and *Yahtzee* in every home. Although it's not a realistic prospect, I've still designed the game with that in mind, keeping the barrier to entry low, so that it's accessible to brand new players but still satisfying for D&D players. Once the game's in every household I'd rather support it with adventure modules than splatbooks and settings. In writing the *Oddpendium* additions I made sure to avoid rules bloat. I'd want to support the game with that promise, giving more ideas, more tools, and exciting scenarios, without creating new mechanics for each one.

CK: Thanks so much for the interview. Where should folks go to find out more about *Into the Odd* and the rest of your work?

CM: A pleasure! My blog is soogames.blogspot.com and the final version of *Into the Odd* should be appearing there in the next few weeks.

GREYCANDLE MANOR

Atop Priory Hill, ten minutes leisurely walk from the outskirts of the village, sits Greycandle Manor. Originally built as a Synod priory, the property was later purchased and renovated by Baron and Lady Archibald Greycandle, who lived there until both died of extreme old age 8 years ago.

Local legends suggest that the manor grounds are haunted by the apparition of a headless monk, one of the local order who was slain as punishment for his inappropriate affections for a visiting hymnist.

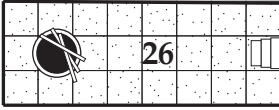
MANOR KEY

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Stairs to area 13
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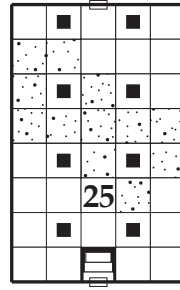
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Stairs to area 18
26. _____
Stairs to area 6, strange bottomless pit

ADDITIONAL NOTES

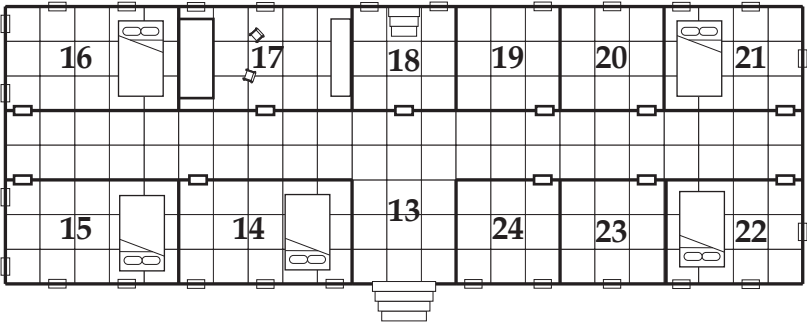
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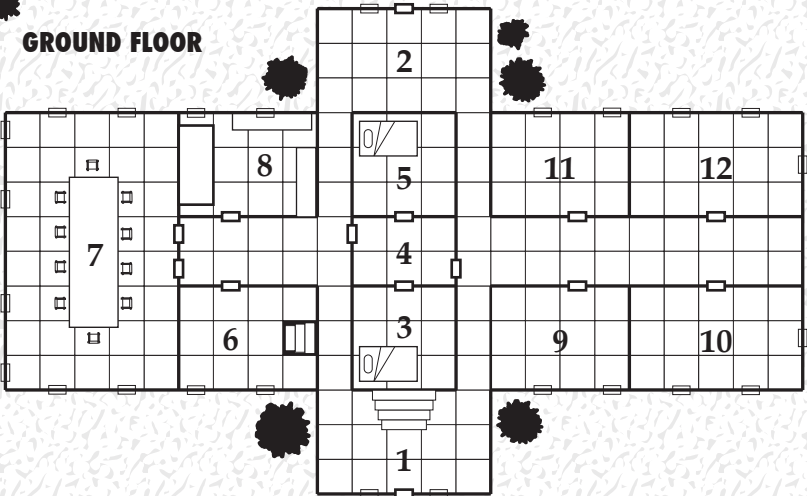
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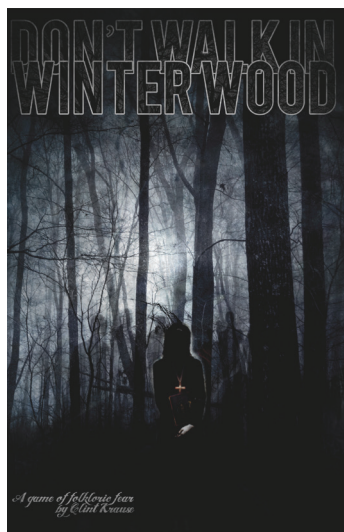
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