

Children of the Night The Created

For use in
Ravenloft
or any other
AD&D® campaign
setting.





Children of the Night:
The Created

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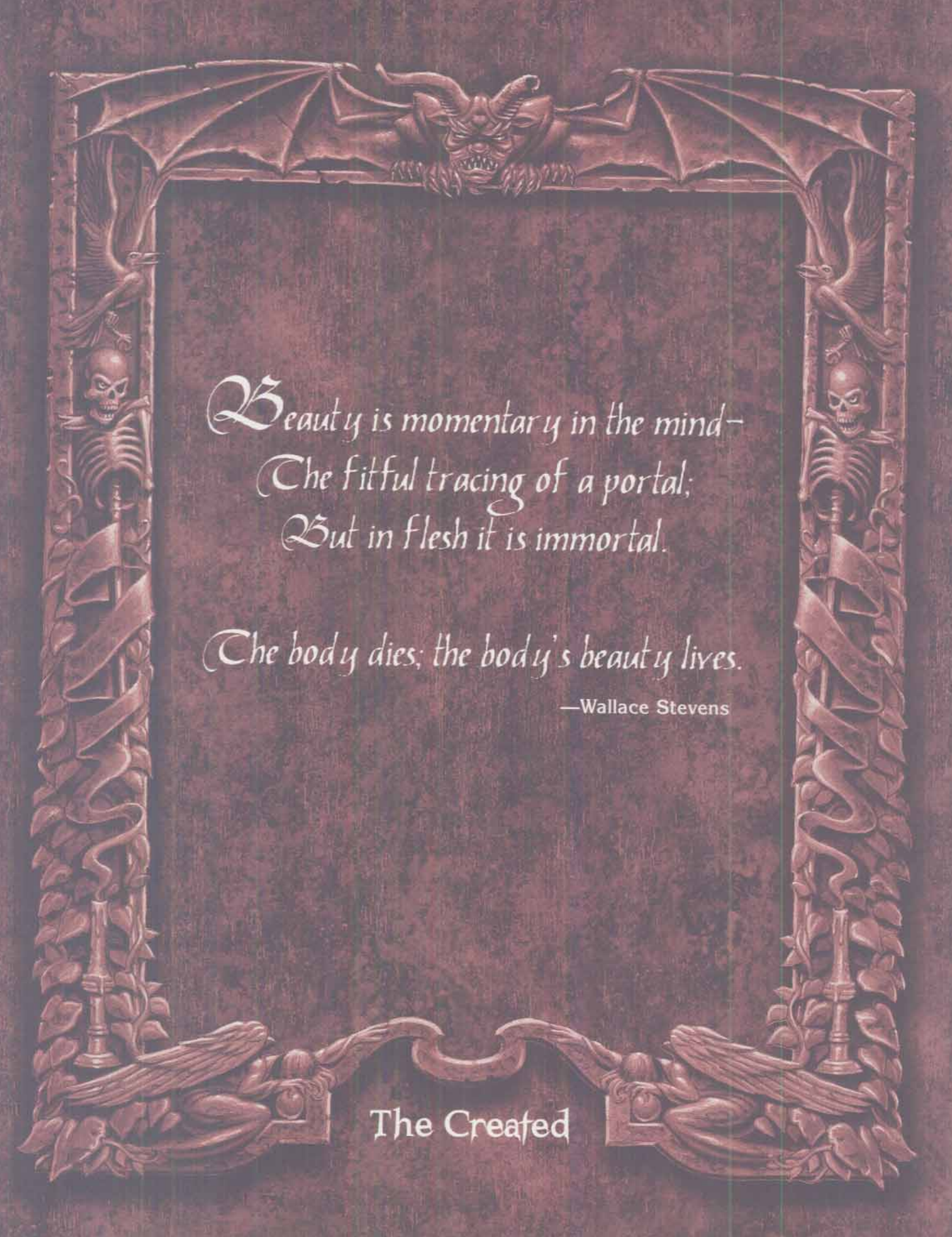
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*Beauty is momentary in the mind—
The fitful tracing of a portal;
But in flesh it is immortal.*

The body dies; the body's beauty lives.

—Wallace Stevens

The Created

INTRODUCTION

FOR THE DUNGEON MASTER



The essence of life and the wonders of its creation have intrigued scientists throughout the ages. Most satisfy themselves with simple debate and scholarly research. A few, however, manage to violate the laws of Nature and grant life to creatures they've assembled from unliving parts. In the pages that follow, you'll discover thirteen beings of such *unnatural origin*. They are called the Created. Unlike ordinary golems, each is a unique, fully developed character. And all are waiting to join your campaign.

THE CONCISE GOLEM



Characters in this product complement material in *Van Richten's Guide to the Created*, a RAVENLOFT® sourcebook. While you can run the upcoming adventures without that book, the information it contains will enhance your understanding of the Created and help you fine-tune each golem to suit your personal campaign. For convenience, key concepts from van Richten's notes are covered below.

Basic Attributes

RAVENLOFT golems tend to be hardy. Although some individuals stray pretty far from "the norm," the following base statistics serve as a useful benchmark: Strength 19, Dexterity 18, Constitution 20, Intelligence 9–19, Wisdom 2, Charisma 6. These values apply to flesh golems, but the reasoning behind them gives insight into the general attributes of all Created.

Physical Traits: The Created can offer plenty of surprises in combat. The trick is to exploit your heroes' preconceptions about a golem's physical prowess by confronting them with "a golem of different color."

Most of the Created boast superhuman strength. Either through magical powers or through the exacting demands of construction, they have become more than the sum of their parts (physically speaking). A golem's barehanded attack inflicts 2d8 damage at Strength 19, adds an extra point of damage for every additional point of Strength through 22, and inflicts 3d8 at Strength 23. Clearly, golems are much stronger than they appear—that's part of their morbid appeal. You can take advantage of this trait by describing a creature that looks as if it might fall apart in a gust of wind; then surprise the heroes with its astounding feats of strength. On the other hand, some golems do suffer from poor construction. So "well-informed" heroes might meet a muscle-bound behemoth and retreat, never suspecting their foe actually has the strength of an emaciated kobold.

Similarly, the Created often possess a dexterity that

belies their clumsy appearance. To heighten surprise, you might accentuate a golem's apparent difficulty in walking and talking normally—until need drives the creature to demonstrate its true agility.

Finally, the Created usually enjoy superhuman resiliency. The key factor here, in game terms, is regeneration. A golem with the base Constitution score of 20 regains 1 hit point each hour (six turns), and higher rates of regeneration are common. As van Richten points out, some golems *hyper-regenerate*: After being reduced to 0 or fewer hit points, they regain 10 points per round until completely healed. (They can rise up to fight again at 0 hps, but most prefer to wait until fully restored.) A high Constitution score conveys extra hit points upon a character, but regeneration is the key to the golem's respective ability. The lesson for heroes: Golems are much easier to defeat than destroy.

Mental Traits: A golem's intelligence generally matches the brain used in its construction, with a slight reduction in the score. However, great wit and utter stupidity are rare. Further, most golems are less intelligent than their creators, no matter whose brain has been "borrowed." Extraordinary Intelligence scores (low or high) normally serve only to explain some feature of the golem's personality or abilities. Wisdom and Charisma are likewise of lesser importance to a golem's makeup. Both scores are typically low, reflecting the creature's lack of life experience and a tendency to be ugly and ill tempered.

Other Common Attributes

As van Richten himself points out, there is no such thing as "the usual" when it comes to children of the night—and the golems in this book certainly prove that. Nonetheless, some abilities are common enough among the Created to be deemed standard. As a group, these qualities establish the "nature of the beast," defining what makes it a golem. You are encouraged to use these stereotypes against the heroes at every opportunity.

Biological Concerns: Golems do not age or require oxygen as a rule. (That can be especially important in the context of spellcasting.) *Nutritional requirements* vary between creatures, but if a golem doesn't need to eat or drink a specific substance from time to time, there's a good chance it requires virtually no sustenance at all. Moreover, golems are effectively immune to poison and disease. Many also enjoy an immunity to certain weapons, and gain a +4 bonus to saving throws against physical damage.

Zeitgebers: Many golems have an Achilles' heel that van Richten calls a zeitgeber (TSIGHT-gay-ber). It's a particular stimulus that triggers a response over which the golem has no control. Triggers and their effects are as unique as the golems themselves. For example, a zeitgeber may lead to violence or catatonia, a frenzied retreat or a complete shift in personality. Usually, a golem has only one zeitgeber. Never random, it reflects

something about the monster's maker or the way in which it was created. Obviously, discerning a golem's zeitgeber gives heroes a powerful advantage in dealing with the creature. Classic examples of zeitgebers include music, which hypnotizes the golem; cold weather, which induces sleep or hibernation; and fire, which enrages.

Telepathic Link to the Creator: The process of creating a golem forges a mental bond between "parent and child" that cannot be severed. In most cases, the telepathic ability resides solely with the golem, although the link occasionally goes both ways. In essence, this is how golems track their makers: seeing what they see, hearing what they hear, and knowing what they think.

Magic: *Van Richten's Guide to the Created* dictates a number of wizard and priest spells that have unexpected effects upon golems. Space constraints prevent this material from being repeated here. For details, you'll have to consult the good doctor's treatise. If you lack that resource, you can rely on a little common sense to estimate the possible effects of a given spell. For example, fire-based spells tend to be extra effective against flesh golems, but they cause little damage to creatures made of metal.

Extraordinary Abilities: You may wish to spice up the golems in this book by adding or exchanging a few extraordinary abilities. Appropriate powers include animate dead, cause despair, cause horror (fear), climb sheer surfaces (spider climb), diseased touch, energy drain, hyper-regeneration, spell-like abilities, stench of decay (stinking cloud), telepathy, and abilities that stem from having the body parts of unusual creatures (such as a basilisk's eyes or a giant scorpion's tail). See van Richten's notes or the AD&D® core rulebooks for details.

Psychology

Golems typically progress through five stages of psychological development. In stage one, the creature is innocent and dependent—almost childlike in its attitude toward its maker. If and when the creature is met with revulsion or extreme fear (usually from animals or strangers or even after looking in the mirror), stage two sets in: confusion. Innocence fades as the golem comes to grips with its lot in life, its inability to ever fit in. This leads to stage three: a sense of betrayal. Now the golem sees its creator in a much darker light. Before long, the golem becomes aggressive, reaching stage four: contempt for the creator. To punish its maker, the golem threatens, assaults, and often attempts to destroy whatever—or whomever—the creator holds dear. Finally, the creature turns its wrath directly upon its maker, signaling the fifth stage of development: utter hatred.

Techniques of Terror

What is it that sets the golem apart? Other gothic archetypes may evoke more immediate horror: The vampire's tactics are more insidious, the lycanthrope's

attack more brutal. Indeed, it's hard to name a physical quality possessed by golems that does not also belong to another creature. In the end, what makes the golem both fascinating and terrifying is its psychology and that of its creator. To bring out the natural horror of a golem, you can gear your adventure toward the creature's tragic perspective, or focus on the creator's obsession instead.

Tragedy: What goes on inside the mind of a golem? It didn't want to be created, and even if it began its new life in blissful innocence, so much further is its inevitable fall from joy. Its creator is almost assuredly insane, and his or her mortality almost guarantees flaws in the construction process. With rare exceptions, the creature cannot remain good, for everyone it meets will consider it a monster and treat it accordingly.

When running a golem scenario, portray the creature as a victim as much as an aggressor. As its actions grow increasingly violent, its torment of the creator more cruel, its crimes more abhorrent, find ways to remind the heroes that no one suffers more than the golem itself. Better yet, win their sympathy for the creature and then betray it with heinous acts. Convince the heroes to do "the right thing" for the creature, then bring recriminations from the creator and its victims for helping it. One of the most effective uses of a golem scenario is to leave the heroes wondering exactly who is the monster—the golem, the creator, the "angry villagers," or the heroes themselves. Although golem adventures can indeed be very scary, the heroes should conclude them with a sense of moral disgust and perhaps a little sadness. The true horror comes when the heroes realize "this thing is what we are capable of making."

Obsession: Another way to evoke the horror of the golem is not through the creature itself but through its creator. The "mad scientist" who brings the monster to life often has a terrifying tale to tell, and the golem is the physical manifestation of his road to Hell. For example, consider the creator of a flesh golem. This is a person who opens graves, dissects numerous bodies for their parts (perhaps the bodies of those closest to him?), sews them together in bloody detail, defies Nature by forcing life into a dead husk, and somehow thinks that this is a good thing. This is not some mean-spirited lich, fabricating an army of darkness; the creator is attempting to construct a person without the full knowledge necessary for complete success.

Consider how the heroes, or at least one among them, might sympathize with the creator, who undoubtedly has excellent reasons for his or her actions. Is it possible to dissuade him from his path before it's too late? What horrible secrets lie behind her wild eyes, what terrible deeds has she seen and committed? By transforming the golem into a symbol of the creator's state of mind, it becomes more than a monster with hit points and special abilities, and it has the potential to reveal more about human psychology than we might wish to understand.

AGGREGATE GOLEM

What a piece of work is a man! . . . in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god!

—William Shakespeare
Hamlet

BIOGRAPHY



Some claim that the smallest fragment of a person can carry the entire essence of his being. In a remote city recently besieged by a plague, that theory rings true. There, a respected surgeon labors in secret, tending to a monster called the Aggregate. Already the creature possesses the parts and minds of many. Still, the roster of donors slowly grows, as the surgeon struggles to achieve a measure of perfection that might help him forget his most haunting failure. One day soon the work may end, and the Aggregate will house the spirit of the good doctor himself.

Appearance

At first glance, the Aggregate resembles an ordinary flesh golem. It stands almost 7 feet tall. Its dark skin



Aggregate Golem

appears somewhat leathery, but not unpleasantly so. Rather, the tanned flesh nearly hides the careful sutures at the creatures' joints and across its body—and it has many such stitches, all of them monuments to the "donors" who supplied the limbs and organs that make up the Aggregate Golem's body.

The Aggregate Golem

Flesh Golem, Neutral

Armor Class	4	Str	19
Movement	12	Dex	20
Level/Hit Dice	9	Con	20
Hit Points	50	Int	9–19*
THAC0	11	Wis	2–10*
Morale	12	Cha	9
No. of Attacks	2	XP	6,000
Damage/Attack	2d8 (fists)		

1d8+6 (strength bow)

1d8+6 (broadsword)

Special Attacks

Withering touch

Special Defenses

+1 or better weapons to hit; immune to poison, disease, mind- and life-affecting spells; half damage from cold and electrical attacks; +4 bonus to saves against physical damage; regenerates 1 hp/6 turns

Special Vulnerabilities

Red-hot weapons; blessed spears or pitchforks; zeitgeber

Magic Resistance

50%

*The Aggregate's multiple personalities have Intelligence scores ranging from 9 to 19 (1d10+8) and Wisdom characteristics ranging from 2 to 10 (1d8+1).

A zeitgeber may force the Aggregate to shift personalities, causing it to go either berserk or catatonic for 1d6 rounds during the shift (see "Combat").

Construction

In many ways, the Aggregate resembles other flesh golems. However, this creature has been assembled with extraordinary care—and for a very special purpose. The Aggregate's creator, Dr. Vannen, looks upon its body as a potential vessel for his own mind. (Since the golem already has several "split" personalities, the creator will have plenty of company, but Dr. Vannen intends to be dominant.)

Assembled from more than a dozen different "donors," the Aggregate contains only the best materials. If a

AGGREGATE GOLEM

superior replacement becomes available, the doctor may cut again and make the improvement. No beggars, executed murderers, or unfortunate travelers have gone into the construction of this masterpiece. It has the best hands and sharpest eyes in town (hence the unusually high Dexterity). The former came from a pianist, the latter from a hunter. A skilled thief gave the Aggregate its ears. The muscles of a circus strongman flex beneath the tanned skin of its arms, and the brain of a brilliant doctor gives the creature its uncanny intelligence. Internal organs hail from a variety of unwitting donors. All of these donors suffered outwardly from the town's rotting disease—losing limbs, their faces, their lives—but internally they offered perfection.

Some beauty resides in the golem's masculine face, but the strain of the surgery will always show. It is that strain that makes the Aggregate's story so poignant. Only the best of humanity could go into the making of such a monstrous masterpiece; and only the best of creators could make something so beautiful and yet so foul.

A Note on Regeneration: Due to its unusual (and strangely ongoing) assembly, the Aggregate Golem cannot repair itself well. If it loses a limb, an organ, or any other part that came entirely from a single donor, it cannot regenerate that part but must instead have a replacement. The loss of the organ or limb eliminates the personality linked to that piece of the Aggregate; and a new piece must be added to the creature before it is whole again. (If that piece comes from someone who dies, the Aggregate gains a new personality too.) If the heroes figure out this weakness, they may be able to use it in their favor. Destroying a part linked to a particularly tough or active personality could make the Aggregate easier to fight.

A similar advantage stems from discovering the Aggregate's many zeitgebers, which prompt a change in personality. See "Combat" for details.

Background

About thirteen years past, a certain small city was thriving. Then a rotting, virulent disease ravaged its people, and the city became a town. Few possessed the knowledge to fight the lethal plague—and fewer still had the courage to do so. Only the iron will of the town's mayor and his loyal soldiers kept the survivors from fleeing and spreading disease into surrounding lands—that iron will, and an unwavering hope that the young doctor who lived on the hill could eventually find a cure.

The doctor was Cyrus Vannen. When the plague struck, he toiled day and night, soothing the sick and seeking a remedy for the hideous disease that rotted parts of a victim's body but left others whole. For some patients, amputation of a rotted extremity was enough, but far too few were saved that way. Soon Dr. Vannen was haunted by an army of lost limbs and lost lives, and by the half-men and crippled women who left his care, never to be whole again.

The town's mayor was Horace DuClerk, a middle-aged lieutenant colonel. He thought he had retired from battle; then the plague became his greatest enemy. To keep the disease from spreading, he ordered his men to seal the town and to enforce strict curfews. The healthy avoided contact with the sick, who sought salvation at Dr. Vannen's crowded hospital on the hill. The mayor praised the doctor and struggled to bolster the town's confidence that a cure would soon be found.

With each passing day, the disease claimed more lives. Still the mayor and the doctor resolved to stand united—and they did, until a certain woman succumbed. It was Verity DuClerk, the mayor's only daughter and Dr. Vannen's only love. A gifted pianist, she had forsaken music to lend her hands to her fiancé's struggle. The sickness began in her legs. She kept it hidden until those legs could no longer support her.

Knowing it was worse than futile, Horace DuClerk went to a weary, heartbroken Cyrus Vannen and begged him to try anything to heal Verity—even unthinkable measures. Begging gave way to shouting. Amid a heated exchange of violent threats and angry protests, Verity DuClerk came upon the pair.

She was confined to a wheelchair and could feel the rot spreading up her legs and into her abdomen. Still, she used her failing energy to end the confrontation. DuClerk departed sadly, leaving his daughter with Dr. Vannen. She had chosen to die at her beloved's side.

But Cyrus Vannen did not give up. His growing surgical skill had given rise to an idea, one that had been too terrible to pursue before. That night, he drugged Verity and laid her on a surgery table. His remaining assistants protested, for they knew Verity was too ill to survive a double amputation. The doctor dismissed them all—all but a woman named Suzanne. She had assisted Vannen with a few private experiments, and he knew she would help him now. When the doctor presented his instructions, Suzanne nodded palely and left the room.

She returned with a young woman, unconscious and near death. The disease had rotted the woman's face and arms, but unlike Verity, she still had a healthy abdomen and legs. Slowly and carefully, Dr. Vannen exchanged Verity's rotting limbs and organs for the other woman's unblemished parts. Hours later, as he sought his bed, Suzanne stepped out to dispose of the fleshly remains Dr. Vannen had cast aside.

When Vannen awoke he was shocked to see his fiancé moving about the surgery. She was disoriented and clumsy, but alive. He leapt to her side and embraced her. At first, she appeared not to recognize him, and then she screamed. Vannen covered her mouth. When he allowed her to cry out again, he knew the words came not from his love, but from the dead girl who had donated her legs to another woman's body.

The doctor snapped. If Verity was gone, then he himself was responsible—he had let her be discarded with her rotting parts. Vannen began shaking the

AGGREGATE GOLEM

woman before him, hoping somehow to bring back his love. The patient spun away and fell, and her head cracked against the floor. The doctor froze. The girl twisted in agony and touched her forehead. Slowly, she looked up at Vannen. The recognition had returned. She smiled feebly and called to him in Verity's voice. And then she was gone.

Three hours later, Suzanne found Dr. Vannen holding his beloved's corpse, talking of weddings and spring.

They say that time heals all wounds. Perhaps it does heal some of them, for today the town is on the mend. Few survivors recall the full horror of that first year of the plague; they prefer to forget. Now that twelve years have passed, the disease is rare and no longer seems virulent. Curiously, it targets the talented and the strong, but thanks to Dr. Vannen and most his able assistant, fatalities are no longer common. An aging and somewhat feeble-minded DuClerk still serves as mayor, largely because no one wants to take his place. Since his daughter's tragic death, he and Dr. Vannen rarely speak.

Dr. Vannen remains a respected member of the community, though he has become more reclusive. Suzanne handles most of his patients. Only she knows Dr. Vannen's darkest secrets and assists him in the dead of night. Vannen has never given up on the possibility of transplanting living organs and limbs into diseased patients in the hope of curing them. In fact, he has progressed far beyond his original efforts, constructing a creature made only of the healthiest and purest parts. He saved the hands of his beloved Verity and put them onto strong arms and a healthy body. For some reason, he chose to make the golem male—perhaps in an effort to distance himself from his creation. Or perhaps he simply could not bear the thought of losing Verity again.

Though it lacks nothing in the way of parts, the Aggregate remains a work in progress. Dr. Vannen makes improvements with uncanny regularity. Every December 4, when he is remembering his former fiancé's birthday, he refines the golem further. Every July 16, on the anniversary of her untimely death, he does the same. Every year, two or more cases of "the Rot" appear in November and June, and every year Dr. Cyrus Vannen has a chance to dedicate life to the memory of his sweet Verity's death.

Personality

The Aggregate has many different personalities, and it may possess more before Dr. Vannen completes his work. Every person who has died to give the Aggregate a new and better part gives the creature a new personality and intellect. Dr. Vannen understands this well; occasionally he has added parts to the Aggregate simply to improve its mental characteristics. Some of the personalities that linger in the Aggregate include:

- A rugged huntsman with the eyes of an eagle and the cunning of a fox. He sees the world around him as a forest and those who oppose him as prey.

- A circus strongman whose mighty muscles give the Aggregate its great strength. He seeks to impress those around him with his strength and will not hesitate to crush his enemies.
- A wily thief who once thought to raid Dr. Vannen's home for the treasures left behind by his deceased patients. Disappointed in her efforts, she now gives the Aggregate a sharp set of ears that can hear the tread of a mouse's feet.
- A distinguished doctor who once consulted with Dr. Vannen and accidentally discovered his experiment—or was discovered by it. His brain occupies the golem's head, even though his thoughtful personality and skill as a planner are not always dominant.
- A sad but kind pianist whose only loves are seemingly lost to her now. Her former fiancé has done things she cannot think about anymore and her father cannot, should not, will not ever know of her true fate—at least, not if she can help it. Bound to the Aggregate until her graceful hands are replaced, Verity DuClerk gives it the only conscience and charity it is likely to have.

Other personalities reside in the Aggregate, but they rarely make an appearance. Unless a zeitgeber triggers a change (see "Combat"), Dr. Vannen has complete control over the golem's identity, choosing which personality comes to the fore. He never willingly draws out Verity; it's too painful. (Still, he cannot bring himself to replace her hands and let her go.)

The telepathic bond between the doctor and the Aggregate is strong, but like most creators, he cannot read his golem's thoughts or see through its eyes. Nonetheless, the Aggregate bends to his will.

More than once, parts of the Aggregate have tried to end the creature's existence. But Dr. Vannen is not ready to see his monument to his beloved disappear. Indeed, someday he hopes to join her in the Aggregate . . . but not just yet.

Combat

The Aggregate does not relish violence. In fact, it only engages in combat when its lair is discovered or when Dr. Vannen has sent it on an errand and the golem confronts a threat. Even if Dr. Vannen's control should be severed, the golem is unlikely to become more aggressive.

Nonetheless, the Aggregate readily defends itself using any means consistent with its dominant personality. Dr. Vannen can set that personality himself. Usually, he calls upon the huntsman or the thief when sending the golem on an errand, and he keeps the doctor or the strongman dominant when the creature is in the lab.

The huntsman uses a powerful strength bow or a broadsword when he can, while the strongman relies on the golem's great fists. The doctor personality avoids

AGGREGATE GOLEM

combat or uses his fists, and the thief does the same (the golem has no daggers for backstabbing).

Withering Touch: For most victims, the golem's most fearsome attack relates to the town's old troubles. If the Aggregate hits someone with its bare hands, the victim must make a successful saving throw vs. disease or succumb to a terrible rot. The effects resemble those caused by a *staff of withering*, though they take place over several days. Brown, flaky patches appear on the area struck by the Aggregate (determine hit location randomly). The affected body part will begin to age and become less and less operable over the next few days. For every day the disease goes uncured, the affected part ages ten years. *Cure disease* or a similar spell halts the degenerative effects, but only a *limited wish* or *wish* spell can reverse the process.

The Aggregate can "turn off" this disease touch at will, but that only happens in two instances: (1) Dr. Vannen demands it (unlikely, unless he wants to preserve certain parts of his creation's victims), or (2) Verity's personality is ascendant. In the latter case, it is unlikely Verity will attack anyone in any way, except in defense of an innocent or Dr. Vannen himself.

Zeitgebers: Unlike most golems, the Aggregate has multiple zeitgebers—one for each prominent personality. Each may cause a particular personality to struggle to the fore.

Personality	Zeitgeber
Huntsman	Being attacked by an animal or seeing a wild animal in a hunting situation
Strongman	Seeing someone performing a feat of strength or being attacked barehanded
Doctor	Being confronted with a mental challenge
Thief	Seeing a chance to steal or acquire valuables through stealth or trickery
Verity	Being appealed to for mercy, hearing a piano playing, or seeing Dr. Vannen in danger

Should any of these triggers occur, the Aggregate Golem must make a morale check (which can be modified based on the strength of the trigger or the creature's own current morale situation). If the Aggregate fails, it shifts to another personality over the course of 1d6 rounds. Dr. Vannen can do nothing to stop this. If a shift occurs during combat (or the Aggregate is assaulted during that time), the creature goes berserk, attacking anyone within reach with its fists until its new personality settles in. Under peaceful circumstances, the golem simply falls unconscious until the personality change is complete.

Special Advantages: The Aggregate can only be hit by +1 or better weapons, blessed spears or pitchforks, and by weapons as large as or larger than a short sword that have been heated red-hot. It is immune to poison, disease, and mind- and life-affecting spells. It takes half damage from cold and electrical attacks (if it can

save for half damage, then it saves for no damage at all and only takes half on a failure). It gains a +4 to all saves versus other physical damage and regenerates 1 hp every 6 turns. Finally, it has a magic resistance of 50%.

SICKNESS AMONG US



Rather than offering a linear adventure plot, this section presents a situation in which the heroes can become embroiled, and a mystery for them to solve. The stage has been completely set with descriptions of the town's main characters and how they react to newcomers. What happens next is largely up to you.

While heroes can be of any level, if you feel they will come into direct conflict with the Aggregate (entirely possible), they should probably have at least one magical weapon ready and be 4th to 6th level in experience. It would be inconvenient for the heroes to have access to *cure disease* spells or abilities, though that can be worked around.

This adventure can take place in almost any region that contains a small, isolated city or a large town in which the people enjoy a fair amount of freedom. The horror of the tale comes from within, rather than without.

Adventure Setup

It has been a dozen years since the plague known only as "the Rot" swept through the city. Surviving victims—all amputees, missing hands, arms, legs, or feet—still make up a significant portion of the town. Occasional single cases of the Rot still occur, but it is no longer a leading cause of death.

The city is recovering, yes, but the scars linger. Horace DuClerk is still mayor, enforcing a strict code of laws designed to keep the Rot or any disease from ravaging the city again. His militaristic policies are starting to annoy newcomers and youthful residents, and even some plague survivors whose memories have faded.

Dr. Cyrus Vannen still practices medicine in his manor, but he seldom leaves it. Suzanne, his assistant, handles all but the most serious medical queries. Dr. Vannen's image has changed from local hero to tragic figure and, finally, to a weird eccentric who still serves a city that has come to look upon him with a skewed eye.

And now the rumors have begun again—tales heard just after the plague, circulating anew. In the taverns, loose tongues describe a creature that walks the night and brings the Rot to those who no longer believe in the disease's power. Some say it is a ghost of someone who died from the disease, and that it haunts the clinic and the burial ground just outside the city walls. Still others tell more gruesome tales of body parts and rotten flesh re-emerging from the mass grave to drag the living into their communal hell.

AGGREGATE GOLEM

A few "theorists" link Dr. Vannen to the horror. Perhaps, say some, the creature is a manifestation of the Rot, returning for vengeance against the man who fought so hard to destroy it. On rare occasions, someone suggests Dr. Vannen himself created the "thing." This claim is very unpopular. Though he may be considered creepy, the doctor is generally respected. Sympathetic citizens recall how he lost his true love to the plague. Nowadays he sees only hopeless cases personally, and no one wants to be one of those.

The Adventure Begins

The adventure starts when the heroes reach the city's bare stone walls. Outside the walls, the hilly ground has been scarred by fire. The charred patches mark the sites of mass funeral pyres and graves, where bodies and limbs were unceremoniously discarded at the height of the plague. Inside the walls, the city rises to a summit. To the east looms a large, dark manor, and to the west lies a brown fortress linked to the city wall. Local businesses and houses made of stone and wood occupy the remaining ground.

If the heroes arrive at night, the gatehouse torches burn brightly. Beyond the gate, the city looks dark and silent. The manor on the hill is barely visible, and a feeling of gloom pervades the area.

By day, however, the city comes to life. It boasts a busy market and an emerging theatre district. Sellers of protective amulets and curative potions do well—as long as their remedies live up to their claims. Fraudulent sale of medicine is one of the city's many capital offenses.

Bypassing gate guards is another. No one except a resident may enter the city at night. During the day, all those who wish to enter must submit to a thorough search, even a local returning from a trip. Adventuring heroes may think the guards are searching for contraband or weapons—but weapons are not prohibited here (within reason), and few items are considered contraband. The searchers are looking for signs of disease.

By the mayor's decree, only people who are deemed healthy may move freely about the city. Guards have been trained to recognize most outward signs of disease. Both males and females staff the gatehouse post to accommodate same-sex searches. If questioned about the searches, the guards are somewhat taciturn, almost as if their orders embarrass them. If pressed, they tell the story of the plague and what it did to the city. They know nothing, of course, of the Aggregate or of Dr. Vannen's secret experiments, but they can all point to the amputee survivors of the plague and describe the Rot's effects in disturbing detail.

Allowing the Search

Heroes who consent to an exam will undergo a thorough search in private. The guards lead them to

chambers in the gatehouse and ask them to disrobe. If a guard spots an abnormality or a questionable feature, he or she turns to reference texts with pictures. At least one in four guards knows basic first aid and can offer assistance. In a land where a significant portion of the population is still illiterate, this situation should seem extreme to the heroes.

If any heroes bear obvious signs of disease, they'll find themselves escorted to Dr. Vannen's clinic. Even if the guards don't recognize the affliction, they would rather be safe than sorry. If Dr. Vannen signs a Writ of Good Health (usually based on Suzanne's word), they will be allowed to roam the city. Assuming the heroes are not obviously ill, they are given time to dress and granted free passage. Each receives a Writ of Good Health signed by the guard lieutenant, and is instructed to carry it at all times.

Refusing the Search

If a hero refuses to be searched at the gate, the guards present two choices: leave at once, or go see Dr. Vannen for an exam. The guards have a somewhat superstitious awe of Dr. Vannen (like most of the populace), and perceptive heroes should notice that they would not make the choice to visit him in their place.

Resisting the Guards

Beyond their medical know-how, the guards represent an average city patrol. If the heroes try to bypass them, they might manage to succeed.

Fighting is inadvisable, however. Twenty guards stand at the main gate, and at the first sign of trouble they blow an alarm horn, summoning two more patrols of six. Additional guards patrol the wall to thwart climbers and can assist their fellows below. If that's not enough, Mayor DuClerk and his personal guards (see "Prominent Characters") enter the fray. Finally, if the heroes manage to battle their way in, citizens will take up arms against them. No one looks kindly upon a potentially sick invader in this town.

Note: Only the guards on the walls carry bows.

Gate Guards, male and female humans F1 (20+): AC 6 (ringmail + shield); MV 9; hp 6 each; THACO 20; #AT 1 (spear) or 2 (short bow); Dmg 1d6 or 1d6/1d6; SZ M; ML avg (10); AL LG.

Corporals, male and female humans F1 (1 per 6 guards): AC 6 (ringmail + shield); MV 9; hp 9 each; THACO 20; #AT 1 (spear); Dmg 1d6; SZ M; ML steady (12); AL LG.

Special Equipment: Horn (can be blown to summon reinforcements).

If the guards subdue the heroes, they prefer to capture rather than kill, confining the heroes until Dr. Vannen can examine them. Even if Dr. Vannen grants them a clean bill of health, after this kind of ruckus, it would be very tough to talk one's way into the city.

Inside the City

Once inside the city, the heroes can visit the marketplace, seek out an inn or tavern, or do any number of things. Simply walking around with their eyes open, they should learn the following:

- Guard patrols are everywhere. This has to be one of the best-policed cities in the land.
- Occasionally, guards draw people aside, escort them to a place offering some privacy, and search them. Some people protest, but no one seriously resists. Those with recent Writs of Good Health (like the ones the heroes may have received at the gate) are exempt.
- About one in every fifteen adults in the city has lost a hand, an arm, a foot, a leg, or some other body part. (The wounds are twelve years old.) These unfortunate people are not shunned, but clearly some of the younger citizens are uncomfortable around them. Unblemished survivors of the plague also tend to avoid amputees; they'd rather not remember that time.
- If questioned on the street, people avoid discussing the reasons behind the amputations and the strict searches (though some may grumble about "the mayor's paranoia").
- Posters detailing curfew laws abound, and they promise strict enforcement. (If asked, any passerby will confirm the signs are correct.) One hour after dark, the only people permitted on the streets are guards and those bearing special papers signed by Mayor DuClerk or Dr. Vannen. First offenders receive a substantial fine and time in the gatehouse. The second time, they're expelled from the city for one year. A third offense is a capital crime.

If the heroes get involved in discussions with the locals (particularly over a few drinks), they can find out a little more:

- Even relatively new residents know the story of the Rot and how it claimed hundreds of victims about a dozen years ago. The disease caused flesh to wither away and die. Usually, it spread from the extremities inward until the victim was overcome. Everyone can share personal tales of woe about a loved one or describe so-and-so's horrible end (it gets maudlin sometimes).
- Dr. Vannen and the mayor struggled to save the town, but hundreds succumbed, including Verity DuClerk, the mayor's daughter. The mayor took her death very hard. Now he's "paranoid" about *any* disease and enforces good health in an extreme fashion (though most acknowledge it's "for our own

good"). Other than that, he's a decent man.

- The mayor remains very cool toward Dr. Vannen even while he respects the man's abilities. This probably stems from his daughter Verity's death. Sure, she kept her disease secret until it was simply too late, but as her fiancé and as a doctor, shouldn't Vannen have recognized the signs?
- A few locals believe the doctor contracted the disease himself and has been horribly scarred (mostly in places he keeps covered). His deformity—and Verity's death—have turned him into a recluse.
- The Rot is no longer contagious and only strikes a couple of people each year. If a hero asks why, a friendly debate is bound to follow. Some believe the doctor came up with some sort of "almost perfect" cure. Others say the city's populace has grown resistant to the Rot; after all, new cases usually involve visitors—especially the strong ones. (A subsequent wink toward the heroes should prompt a bit of nervousness.)

If the heroes really probe, they'll find out the following:

- Dr. Vannen still treats patients, but only occasionally, and rarely locals. Nearly everyone who visits the clinic sees his assistant instead, and unless the malady is life threatening, that suits patients just fine. For the most part, Dr. Vannen limits his practice to hopeless cases, and naturally very few of them leave the clinic alive. No one really blames Dr. Vannen—in fact, most people believe he treats doomed patients because he would rather take the guilt for their deaths on his own head than make his assistant bear it. Still, a visit to Dr. Vannen is a last resort, and probably a bad omen.
- Mayor DuClerk is almost as reclusive as Vannen. He seldom leaves his home, and when he does, his personal guards surround him. He holds audiences occasionally with the city council, but never sits closer than twenty feet from any of them. He appears to be afraid of contracting any sort of illness.
- In a hushed voice, a local confides that some sort of creature haunts the old burial grounds from time to time. Maybe it's a ghost or a zombie, or even a collection of body parts "come back to claim more victims" for the Rot. Others might scoff, but no one would recommend hanging about the mass grave and burning area at night. It's probably not safe, and it's certainly not smart.

Prominent Characters

As the adventure unfolds, heroes may make the acquaintance of the town's major players: Mayor DuClerk, Dr. Vannen, and the doctor's able assistant, Suzanne Faronne. Of the three, Suzanne is most likely to cause a stir; one day she hopes to seize control of the Aggregate for herself.

AGGREGATE GOLEM

Mayor Horace DuClerk, male human F5: AC 10; MV 12; hp 39; THACO 16 (15 w/longsword +1); #AT 1 (longsword +1); Dmg 1d8+1; SA necklace of missiles; SZ M (5' 9"); ML champion (15); Str 12, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 14; AL LN.

Special Equipment: Necklace of missiles, plate armor +1 (which he wears only if the city is threatened or the Aggregate is discovered and exposed).

Mayor DuClerk is a controlling, arrogant, and somewhat paranoid man. He lives in his fortress and seldom walks among the people he rules, though he will don his old armor and fight if the city is truly threatened. He still misses his daughter terribly and occasionally dreams that she has been imprisoned in Dr. Vannen's manor (which is truer than he knows). He feels guilty because of these dreams—mostly because his last words to Verity were harsh, but also because he can't bring himself to visit Cyrus Vannen, a man he still respects and considers a hero.

DuClerk stands about 5 feet 9 inches tall, with a heavy build. Internally, he feels guilt almost as a reflex action and that makes him angry. Outsiders who talk to him do so only at his behest, and usually in the sanctity of his fortress.

When the mayor does go out, or receives visitors, he is always accompanied by six of his personal guard.

Mayor's Guards, male humans F3 (20): AC 5 (chainmail); MV 9; hp 19 each; THACO 18; #AT 1 (longsword); Dmg 1d8; SZ M; ML elite (14); AL LN.

The mayor's elite guards share his paranoia regarding disease and his fanaticism about enforcing his decrees. They run errands for him in the city and will look into any incident he thinks is significant.

Dr. Cyrus Vannen, male human M9: AC 7 (Dex +3); MV 12; hp 22; THACO 18; #AT 1 (scalpel); Dmg 1d3; SA spells; SD spells; SZ M (6'); ML fanatic (18); Str 8, Dex 17, Con 13, Int 18, Wis 12, Cha 16; AL LE; XP 2,000.

Special Equipment: Surgeon's tools, various potions and herbs.

Spellbook (4/3/3/2/1): 1st—alarm, burning hands*, charm person*, color spray*, friends, identify, jump, sleep*, wizard mark; 2nd—bind, blindness*, forget*, knock, mirror image*, web, wizard lock; 3rd—delude*, feign death, fireball*, slow*, suggestion, wraithform; 4th—energation*, minor creation*, stonewall, wall of ice; 5th—animate dead*, feeblemind.

*Indicates memorized spell.

Dr. Vannen is a quiet, obsessed man. Over the course of his exhausting labors, he has delved into the arcane in a failed effort to cure the Rot. This is undoubtedly what led him to create the Aggregate, and it is what drives him still. He has become consumed

with the desire to create the perfect being—one that will never know sickness and never die. The fact that his Aggregate Golem is immune to poison, disease, and many types of weapons has not satisfied him; twice a year he seeks to improve upon his creation, selecting the best city-dweller or traveler as another victim.

A thin, sandy-haired man of indeterminate age, Dr. Vannen usually appears tired and worn. Only in his secret lab does he appear rejuvenated. He has already committed himself to transferring his own mind into the Aggregate "when it is perfect" but, in the meantime, he works toward his goal with an unholy passion.

Suzanne Faronne, female human M3: AC 8 (Dex +2); MV 12; hp 8; THACO 20; #AT 1 (dagger); Dmg 1d4; SA spells; SD spells; SZ M (5' 4"); ML fanatic (18); Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 16; AL CE; XP 270.

Special Equipment: Surgeon's tools.

Spellbook (2/1): 1st—charm person*, friends*, hypnotism, light, read magic; 2nd—alter self*, ESP, scar.

*Indicates memorized spell.

Suzanne is a fiery, aggressive, self-centered woman. She came to the city as young girl, just after the outbreak of Rot. She watched her family die of the disease and sought to flee the city before it claimed her as well. Unfortunately, she was caught by the mayor's guard and sentenced to work at the burial mounds.

Changing places with a sick nurse, she quickly learned the basics of first aid, amputation, and minor thievery. Before long, she drew the attention of one of Dr. Vannen's assistants, who brought her to work in his hospital. There, she stole from the dead and dying but learned more of her adopted trade. Undoubtedly her actions spawned the rumors of "stolen treasure."

When Dr. Vannen first began delving into the occult in an effort to save his patients, she was right there, encouraging him. She also sowed the seeds of dissension among his other assistants, feeding their unease at their leader's practices. It is largely due to Suzanne that Dr. Vannen's other aides left him shortly before Verity's death. But Suzanne could never have known how far Dr. Vannen would go to save his love—or how well he would succeed ... and fail.

Suzanne has given up the trade of sneak thief and grave robber for the role of surgeon's assistant and apprentice necromancer. She longs to have the power over life and death that her master owns, and she secretly covets the Aggregate Golem. While Suzanne fears Dr. Vannen's power too much to act against him openly, she longs for the day she will be left alone with the Aggregate and the doctor's hard-won tomes. She cares nothing for those around her and will do anything to further her own cause.

Suzanne often goes into town on Dr. Vannen's behalf to obtain supplies and occasionally to treat the sick.

She plays her part very well. Only in the most unguarded moments does she let her contempt for those around her show, and then only briefly.

She is not above spreading the occasional rumor about her master's power to heal or the mayor's paranoia. She has a pass to roam the city after dark.

Hidden Horrors

The Aggregate is not the only creature lurking about the city. Thanks to Vannen's experiments with animating dead flesh, a host of crawling claws patrol his manor and its grounds. Outside the city, zombies haunt the scorched area surrounding the mass graves. One in every ten creatures has a rotting touch just like the Aggregate's; on a successful hit, either the crawling claw or the zombie can confer the disease. (See "Combat" for details.)

Encounters with either of these creatures can help flesh out your adventure. As heroes roam the city, they may also encounter guard dogs.

The Action

To lure the heroes into the web of treachery spun by Dr. Vannen, consider one these possible scenarios:

- Suzanne has finally decided to move against her master and will try to seize control of the Aggregate through necromancy—just as soon as Dr. Vannen is out of the picture. She manipulates the zombies of the burn area to attack the city, climbing the walls and invading the streets. She places some crawling claws in town as well, leaving enough evidence to show that these creatures are Dr. Vannen's creations. She hopes the trail leading back to the manor will force the mayor to attack Dr. Vannen and kill him, thereby giving her the chance to take control of the Aggregate. "Responsible" heroes will stop the attack and try to figure out what's happening before Dr. Vannen winds up dead, and before the Aggregate comes under Suzanne's control.
- Dr. Vannen wants another part for his golem. A troupe of performers enters the town and one of them, a beautiful dancer, disappears. A local boy discovers her mauled body near the burn area. Curiously, her feet are missing; they appear to have been cut with a sharp blade. A few days later, a juggler from the same troupe turns up dead, and his hands are missing. Residents blame the spirit or creature haunting the burn area. Some actually claim to have seen the Aggregate, but no one knows exactly what he or she saw. Then a brilliant prestidigitator from the same troupe becomes infected with the Rot after the Aggregate attacks him. That's enough bad luck for the locals. In an angry confrontation, they demand that troupe leave town. Suzanne shows up and offers to take the prestidigitator to Dr. Vannen for treatment. The mob

agrees, but they still want the rest of the troupe banished. A performer implores the heroes to help the troupe; they want to discover what happened to their friends and help the afflicted magician.

- Apparently, the mayor is mad. A few cases of the Rot have turned up and DuClerk has ordered everyone to stay in their homes—day and night. Those who do not obey are either turned out of the town or killed. Within a few days, word comes around that Mayor DuClerk has learned about Dr. Vannen's past experiments on Verity and seeks to destroy him by marching on the hospital. Many citizens will fight against this order (after all, the mayor is mad and Dr. Vannen, while eccentric, did help end the plague). The heroes must find out if the mayor is mad or correct in his accusations, and keep the soldiers from destroying the populace. Meanwhile, Dr. Vannen sends the Aggregate out to kill the Mayor.
- The Aggregate breaks free. Verity's mind takes over the golem and Dr. Vannen cannot stop it from leaving the manor. The golem makes its way into the city, confused and struggling against its telepathic compulsion—and heading toward the fortress. In fits of berserk rage (during its shifts), the golem attacks several people. The heroes can drive it from the town (Verity will cause it to flee rather than stand and fight), but they still face a mystery. Where did it come from and what was it doing? Confused, Verity seeks out her father to ask for his help. Would she dare tell him who she is?

Recurrence

The Aggregate may raise havoc in a subsequent adventure. If Dr. Vannen dies, the golem's multiple personalities will battle for control of its body—assuming Suzanne doesn't take charge. Remember that some of the personalities wish only to end their existence. That kind of internal struggle surely would cause continual personality shifts with unpredictable results.

Without Dr. Vannen or Suzanne's control, the creature may venture out and spread the Rot. While the Aggregate is not inherently evil, it does share its creator's desire to become "perfect." It may attack those it sees as prime donors and attempt to transplant organs or limbs onto itself.

If Dr. Vannen succeeds in transferring his mind into the Aggregate, he will not give up his quest for perfection. Of course, that quest will present several unique challenges. Only Suzanne would have assisted Vannen by transplanting his brain into the golem—and once that's complete, she'll make every effort to seize control. If Vannen can fend off her attempts, he may try to improve his new body. Or he may find himself at war with the other personalities. Alternately, he may try to create other Aggregates and launch a "superior race" in his own image.

ANGELIQUE

Even memory is not necessary for love. There is a land of the living and a land of the dead and the bridge is love, the only survival, the only meaning.

—Thornton Niven Wilder
The Bridge of San Luis Rey

BIOGRAPHY



A beautiful woman, refined and fragile, cannot remember her past. Tormented by waking dreams of a madman seemingly fixated on her, she struggles to understand her predicament and escape the deadly clutches of her cerebral stalker. In the end, she uncovers the terrible truth, but the knowledge may be more horrible than the amnesia.

Appearance

No one who looks upon the lovely raven-haired woman known as Angelique could guess her true nature. The scars wrought by her construction are faint and completely hidden beneath her clothing. Her beautiful

face has delicate features, with just a hint of blush on her creamy white skin. Angelique's cheekbones are high, her nose small and turned the slightest bit upward. She wears her shining hair swept up, although a few dark ringlets always escape to frame her face. Anyone who stares deeply into her large brown eyes may see an occasional flash of fear and confusion. Her lips, small and red, are often pursed in a worried frown. Everything about her speaks of delicacy and vulnerability.

This petite, comely golem wears an elegant gown of the finest linen, trimmed with satin, all the color of fresh vanilla custard. Embroidered sleeves cover her slender wrists, and the gown's high neckline conceals the faint mark encircling her almost-perfect throat. On her left hand she wears a gold bracelet with an inscription: *To Angelique, I pledge my eternal devotion.*—K.

Angelique

Flesh Golem, Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class	8	Str	13
Movement	12	Dex	13
Level/Hit Dice	5	Con	9
Hit Points	30	Int	11
THACO	20	Wis	5
Morale	3	Cha	17
No. of Attacks	2	XP	NA
Damage/Attack	1d4/1d4 (fists)		
Special Attacks	Nil		
Special Defenses	+1 or better magical weapon to hit; immune to poison, disease, life-affecting spells; +4 bonus against physical damage and mind-affecting spells and powers		
Special Vulnerabilities	Carriages; Karl		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

Construction

Unlike most golems, Angelique has no obvious scars or disfigurement. Her doting husband and creator, Karl von Salzburg, took extraordinary care to preserve the parts that now make up her form. Moreover, he observed painstaking detail in stitching those parts together, leaving seams that are barely noticeable even when she's nude.

Only Angelique's head is original, belonging to the woman Karl von Salzburg married. She died under the



wheels of a carriage, but Karl, a gifted surgeon, has "restored" her. All her component parts came from extraordinarily beautiful women, murdered by Karl and used while fresh. Now Angelique's body is just as young, vibrant, and healthy as they once were. Aside from the torso donor, each victim gave up a pair of appendages: arms, legs, hands, or feet.

Angelique has no special abilities, just a golem's usual resistances and immunities. She believes she's a somewhat fragile woman with amnesia, and acts accordingly. In fact, the golem has yet to even recognize, much less utilize her own strength and combat abilities. The first time someone strikes her, she'll probably faint.

This golem appears entirely human. (That's why a kind noble who found Angelique wandering has taken her in.) She has no unusual dietary requirements, and she eats "like a bird." That's all the "poor thing" needs to sustain herself.

Like others of her kind, Angelique has a telepathic link to her creator's mind. Because of her ignorance regarding her nature and identity, this manifests itself as waking dreams. She has visions of Karl's thoughts when he is most tormented. Karl still suffers guilt over the crimes he committed in restoring his wife, and he relives the murders in his mind. These grisly memories reach Angelique at unusual times, causing her to freeze on the spot and stare at nothingness with a look of abject terror on her face. After a vision passes, Angelique usually screams or cries out, then begins sobbing and ranting about what she has seen. She is firmly convinced that the man in her visions is trying to kill her, for she sees the murders from the victims' viewpoints—thanks to the subtle influence of her borrowed parts. (She has no idea who Karl is, however.)

Zeitgebers: Angelique has two zeitgebers, neither of them pleasant. The first time she sees Karl, her creator, all the horrible memories of what befell her will come crashing back to her in full force. She will scream and babble hysterically and then faint. Upon reviving, she will be devastated and seek to end her own life.

The second zeitgeber is the sight of any horse-drawn carriage. If Angelique spies a carriage before she has seen Karl, she will be irrationally terrified of the vehicle and will flee it. If she sees a carriage after she has seen Karl (and regained her memories), she will instinctively know that the carriage can destroy her and she will throw herself in its path to be trampled.

Background

Angelique and Karl von Salzburg shared a powerful and joyous love. It was evident to anyone who saw the young couple strolling upon the street, smiling arm in arm. Their days were filled with exuberance, their nights with boundless passion—until tragedy struck.

Late one damp and misty evening, the pair was leaving a pub to return home. Suddenly a horse-drawn

carriage came racing around the corner. Fearful for their safety, Karl stopped, but Angelique had already begun to step onto the cobblestone street. Karl reached out to pull her back, but misfortune caused him to jostle her instead. Her first step was misplaced, and she slipped on the damp stones, tumbling directly into the path of the onrushing carriage.

As Karl shouted and reached for his beloved, time seemed to slow. He watched in horror as the heavy wheels rolled over Angelique's soft body. When the carriage had passed, he ran to his wife. Her face still looked peaceful, but the heart in her shattered chest had ceased to beat. An anguished, almost inhuman cry escaped Karl's lips. Strangely, no one appeared; but for his sobs, the street was empty and silent. Half-blinded by tears, Karl gently lifted Angelique and staggered home with her crumpled and bloody form in his arms.

Though young, Karl von Salzburg was fine a surgeon as any. He had honed his skill on small animals, had even grafted limbs, all in the name of science and healing. He had a fine mind as well, but that night anguish perverted his sanity. With each labored step toward home, he became more desperate. By the time he laid Angelique on the operating table, he had convinced himself that he could revive her.

Angelique's body had been mangled, but fortunately her beautiful head and the brain within remained intact. Karl immediately set to work. He placed her corpse in a state of cold to halt tissue degeneration and began to assess the damage. At first, he tried complicated surgeries to repair the battered and broken body, but it was no use. There had been too much internal damage, too many shattered bones. He cried out at the unfairness. He ranted to the sky. Then he truly began to lose reason.

Drawing upon his prior experiments, Karl developed a plan to acquire a new body for Angelique. He set out to find the most delicate, beautiful replacements available. He immediately discounted the notion of grave robbing; decaying bodies would never suffice. Instead, he began to prowl the streets at night, watching carefully for living, breathing women who matched Angelique's stature, complexion, and grace.

The first murder was terrible. More accustomed to saving life than taking it, at first Karl could not bring himself to act. The ensuing struggle was brief, and soon he had his prize. Returning to his laboratory, the doctor discovered (of course) that his victim's beauty paled in comparison to his own beloved Angelique's. In the end, all he could salvage from his first donor were her hands, which he deemed acceptably lovely. The rest of the body he dumped in a distant location.

Over the course of the next several nights, Karl discreetly harvested a torso, a pair of arms, a pair of legs, and a pair of delicate feet, each from different victims. He had to be cautious; with each dawn, word of the disappearances spread. And when the first body was actually discovered, the entire region was gripped

ANGELIQUE

by fear. Evening patrols and search parties combed the area. Fortunately for Karl, by this time he had already gathered what he needed.

Working feverishly, Karl applied himself to the arduous process of rebuilding Angelique. He took the greatest care to prevent tissue decay, and his suturing was painstakingly small and precise. For his efforts, the body he constructed was beautiful and unblemished.

Finally, when he was satisfied that nothing more could be perfected, Karl applied a bit of science he had never thought he would either believe in or use. He drew upon nature's power to generate the spark of life within his rebuilt Angelique. Her heart began to beat. The blood began to flow through her repaired veins. Slow, shallow breathing followed. Though she remained unconscious, she lived! Overjoyed yet exhausted, Karl retired for a time, hoping to return to his beloved's side refreshed and ready to greet her warmly when she awoke. Instead, due to his exhaustion, illness overtook him, and he fell into a feverish coma.

Upon awakening, Angelique was as a child, lost and unknowing. She had no recollection of her life, no knowledge of who she was or why she had come to be in this strange room. She arose, eventually slipping into the world, lost, alone, and afraid. There she wandered for a short time until she was discovered by kind folk who took her in. They care for her still, believing she escaped an attack by the beast responsible for the recent disappearance of so many women.

Karl, meanwhile, sank deeper into the coma, but his mind remained active, reliving his grisly crimes. Even while he lies there still, Angelique receives his thoughts telepathically, *seeing the murders as waking visions*, experiencing them through the eyes of the victims whose body parts—and final terror—she now owns.

Personality

Angelique is unaware of her own nature and history. Like a total amnesiac, she cannot recall her past. Even the first moments of her new existence have slipped away, much as a child's earliest memories are lost. She can only recall wandering a road alone and being found by a traveling peasant who brought her to a nearby village, where she is now. The inscription on her bracelet supplied the name by which others call her, though no one can be certain the bracelet was originally hers.

Angelique is a pleasant woman, showing gracious appreciation for the kindness shown to her, struggling to maintain some sense of propriety and decorum through the trials and tribulations of her inability to recall who she is. This lack of memories does wear on her, however, and she grows ever more despondent and withdrawn as time passes.

Were she to discover (through an external source—for example, being told by another) the truth of her new identity and what Karl has done to her, Angelique would be truly horrified. The hatred she would feel toward her

creator would be strong and vile, and her self-loathing would be even more severe, and so complete that she would prefer to take her own life rather than exist as what she perceives as a monster. However, due to her resilient physical nature, she would find that difficult, adding to her sense of revulsion.

All of the above would pale in comparison to the depths of horror and despair Angelique would experience were she to truly remember her former existence. This can only come about through a face-to-face meeting with Karl. Such a meeting triggers all of Angelique's memories, including her love for him, his devotion to her, the accident, and all that has transpired since. This surge of memories would drive the poor creature completely into despair and it would take extraordinary circumstances to bring her out of it.

Karl, for his part, is wracked with grief and guilt over his criminal behavior. When he awakens from his coma (shortly after the adventure begins), his love for his Angelique drives him to seek her out, still hoping against hope that the two can resume their life of joy. If he is captured and accused of the crimes, he is not initially willing to give up hope in pulling off his charade and will deny the accusations. Eventually, in the face of overwhelming evidence, he breaks down, sobbing his admissions. In the end, though, he is willing to accept the responsibility for the murders, knowing in his heart that his efforts resulted in the restoration of his beloved.

Witnessing the results of a face-to-face meeting with Angelique is another matter entirely. Should Karl see the depth of Angelique's self-loathing, his own sense of accomplishment would flee and despair would instead consume him. He might even go so far as to attempt to destroy her once more, if only to ease her pain and suffering, although the act would drive him completely over the edge.

Combat

Angelique does not possess the great strength that many golems do. Karl's *refined surgery* was unusual, the tissue somewhat delicate. This does not mean, however, that Angelique is a typical human female. She is deceptively powerful and can withstand a substantial amount of damage before going down.

Fortunately for those who would fight her, she does not know her own strength. She's thoroughly convinced she's both vulnerable and human. If faced with the danger of bodily harm, Angelique is as likely to try to flee or even to faint from fright as anything. If cornered and driven to a panic, there is a possibility that she will lash out in terror, and then her assailant is in for an unpleasant surprise. Angelique can inflict 1d4 points of damage with her fists. Striking Angelique with a nonmagical weapon will inflict no damage upon her.

Van Richten claims that all golems are evil. Obviously, he never met Angelique. While there's a slim possibility her nature might change, the only person this

golem seriously threatens is herself. If the heroes realize this, killing her may require a powers check.

LADY LOST



The following adventure draws heroes into the lives of Angelique, Karl, and a community consumed by fear in the aftermath of several disappearances and a grim discovery. The story suits heroes of any level, since the challenge involves solving mysteries and making some hard choices. For high-level heroes, you may want to increase Angelique's strength and damage a bit, and give Karl a sword cane and greater prowess. Even so, the heroes probably won't have much fun if they treat each encounter as a chance to slice and dice ("Look, it's a golem! Kill it!"). Combat simply isn't the focus. It's far more important that the heroes get involved on a more personal, emotional level, trying to set things right. The adventure works best if you stretch out the events, giving the heroes time to get to know Angelique and to consider her a friend (or more).

The adventure can take place virtually anywhere, even outside the RAVENLOFT campaign setting. It merely requires a town large enough to provide Karl with five suitable victims, and a village to which Angelique can wander. The text below places the action in the town of Fortuna (For-CHEW-nuh) and the village of Lelone (Lay-LOAN). Nothing will be lost if you change the names to suit your campaign.

Due to space constraints, the story below has been abbreviated. A much longer version, with multiple twists and turns, can be crafted. Suggestions for expanding the tale appear under "Recurrence" at the end.

Adventure Setup

It has been two weeks since the carriage struck down Angelique, but only a day since she "awakened" along the road from Fortuna to Lelone. A kindly peasant discovered her, and since she appeared well to do, he escorted her to the Kroenenburgs, Lelone's most prominent family. Lord Kroenenburg and his wife took her in. Her bracelet provides the only clue to her name. The Kroenenburgs have sent for a priest from Fortuna, hoping he might help Angelique regain her memory.

On two separate occasions since arriving at the Kroenenburgs, Angelique has experienced waking dreams—visions of a man bent on murder. She saw the man coming toward her, saw the madness in his eyes, and understood that he meant to kill her. During both episodes, she sat perfectly still for a few moments, terror on her face. Then she screamed and sobbed uncontrollably, frightened beyond reason. The startled Kroenenburgs spent nearly an hour reassuring their guest before she calmed down.

Angelique is convinced that she is seeing a prelude to the future. The Kroenenburgs fear she is seeing the past. They have heard of the mysterious stalker, a criminal that has plagued the region around Fortuna, kidnapping beautiful women. Most are presumed dead, though no bodies have been found yet. By some stroke of luck, Angelique must have escaped. The trauma, presumably, has caused her amnesia, and these visions are, in fact, merely remnants of her memory. They are unsure what to do for the poor woman at this point.

When the adventure begins, Karl has been unconscious for two days, suffering from a severe fever in his bedchambers at the Salzburg estate. Since he sent the help away for a time, no one has discovered him. In his illness-induced delirium, he is reliving the murders he has committed.

The Adventure Begins

Start the adventure when the heroes are traveling along a stretch of lightly forested road. Read the following:



The late afternoon is quiet, with a hint of rain hanging in the air. The road you follow has been empty of other travelers. As you round a slight bend in the trail, you encounter four ravens feasting on something just off the road in the underbrush. The creatures take flight in a flurry of wings and a cacophony of angry cawing. In the stillness that follows, you can hear a faint buzzing and detect a sickly sweet odor.



Once the heroes investigate, read the following:



The stench of death is powerful, the swarm of flies thick. A woman's corpse lies in the brush beneath a large tree, covered only by the flies and a few fallen leaves. Her discolored and bloated face stares skyward with lifeless eyes. Her twisted body rests in an awkward position, made even more grotesque by the absence of arms.



If the heroes search at all, they uncover the remains of a once-fine dress, bloody and shredded. They also discover a single hand, severed just above the wrist. If they look further, they discover its mate, apparently dragged off by a small animal (the fingers have been partially chewed). The woman's arms are nowhere to be found.

The town of Fortuna lies just down the road, in the direction the heroes were traveling (a wooden signpost

ANGELIQUE

makes it obvious). The heroes may attempt to transport the body themselves or they may travel ahead to get help, perhaps leaving someone to watch the site.

Once they arrive in Fortuna and report the find, they are quickly referred to the mayor and constable, who are already grave with apprehension. The mayor, Jean von Kurtz, explains that five women have disappeared from Fortuna in the last two weeks. He fears the heroes may have discovered one of them. (He has no idea, however, that Angelique von Salzburg is missing.)

The constable, Otto Kleinz, insists the heroes accompany him back to the site. Once there, he gets an aggrieved look on his face and confirms that the body is that of Maria Osgutt, who disappeared ten days ago. "A fine, well-liked maiden who worked for the baker," he explains sorrowfully. (Note: If the heroes have a *Speak with Dead* spell, Maria can affirm that she was walking alone one evening near the edge of town when she was attacked from behind. She remembers nothing about her assailant.)

Back in Fortuna, Mayor von Kurtz begs the heroes to help the town track down the killer and stop him.

Investigating

Assuming the heroes agree to help Mayor von Kurtz, they have several options on how to proceed. Attempts to pick up the murderer's trail from the site of Maria's body prove fruitless. The road is too well traveled.

They can acquire a list of the missing women. All disappeared within the last two weeks, all at night, all without witnesses. Besides Maria, there are four: Astrid Kraus, Lorelei Korrina, Anna Stumpf, and Stefani Brookhausen. The heroes can question acquaintances of the women, but will learn little beyond a personal description.

If the heroes examine Maria's body carefully, they can confirm that the hands are probably hers. All the cuts (to remove the arms from the shoulders and the hands from the arms) were made with surgical precision. If the heroes ask about individuals with the skill to make such cuts, both the mayor and the constable know that Karl von Salzburg is a man of medicine. (To add depth to the adventure, however, the mayor could also mention the local butcher.)

Hard Choices

Before the heroes can follow up on the lead involving Karl von Salzburg, two other events occur in quick succession, providing the heroes with some hard choices.

A Doctor in the House: A rider arrives from Lelone (two miles southwest) with word that a woman was found wandering the road and taken to the Kroenenburg family. The Kroenenburgs fear she was attacked by the mysterious kidnapper but managed to escape. She seems to have amnesia. A priest is requested to come and tend to her.

A Second Body: A breathless peasant boy rushes into the constable's office. He reports that he has found the body in a stream while fishing. "It's poor Anna," he babbles, "And she's got no legs at all!" The Constable Kleinz hangs his head and prepares to go retrieve the corpse. The heroes may choose to accompany Otto to the new crime scene if they want to gain additional clues. The body lies upstream from town, west-southwest along the stream flows from Lake Fortuna. It's hung up in the shallows.

The heroes have to decide whether to visit the Kroenenburgs in Lelone (especially if they have a priest in the party), go with the constable to take a look at the second body, or go visit Karl von Salzburg to ascertain his involvement in things. If they decide to check out the body the peasant boy has found, they discover that it is indeed Anna Stumpf. The missing legs were severed with surgical precision. If they search, they may eventually find her feet.

If the heroes decide to visit the Kroenenburgs' amnesiac, see "Journey to Lelone," below. If they decide to pay a visit to Karl von Salzburg, see "Desperate Husband."

Journey to Lelone

Lelone lies just two miles from Fortuna. As the village's only building of substance, the Kroenenburg estate stands out. Surrounding cottages house the tenant farmers who work the Kroenenburg's land.

Johann Kroenenburg welcomes the heroes to his home. He appreciates their willingness to attend to the frightened and confused Angelique. He pulls the heroes aside and confides his fear that she is a victim of the mysterious stalker. By this time, he has heard the news of the first body, and firmly believes that Angelique would have been the killer's next victim. He also tells the heroes about Angelique's visions.

For her part, Angelique is grateful for the heroes' efforts to aid her, gracious and refined even under these trying circumstances. Any hero studying her closely, however, can detect that her nerves are frayed. Angelique can tell the heroes very little. She remembers nothing prior to wandering alone along the road between Fortuna and Lelone—and even that seems hazy. A tenant farmer discovered her and brought her to the estate. If she is asked about the visions, she stiffens in obvious fright, but manages to explain what she has seen. Read the following aloud:

"It's horrible," the beauty named Angelique begins. "I can see him, his eyes filled with something much worse than hate. I cannot say for certain what it is, but perhaps it could best be described as mad passion. In any event, he approaches me, hands outstretched, menacing. I can see his face, but I know not who he is."

He's coming for me, I can feel it. His intentions are clear; I am to die at his hands. Oh, it's terribly frightening. I cannot bear to witness it again!" With that, she buries her lovely but troubled face in her delicate hands, sobbing quietly.

Desperate Husband

Any local can direct the heroes to the Salzburg Estate. Along the wooded path, the heroes encounter a man on horseback, obviously distraught. He approaches the heroes openly, introduces himself as Karl von Salzburg, and hands them a locket. "My poor wife Angelique is missing, and I must find her. Have you seen her?" he asks, indicating the portrait in the locket. Anyone giving Karl a close look will notice that he seems unwell, somewhat feverish and pale, and he's subtly wavering in the saddle.

Once a hero makes mention of the missing women or the fact that two bodies have been found, Karl becomes even more distraught. "Oh, my love! I must find her!" he exclaims. He wishes to ride off at once to find his missing wife and begs the heroes to aid him.

Accusations that Karl himself may be involved in the disappearances are met with stern denials. Karl, in his madness, has become quite a good liar. "I have been ill in my bed these last several days. This afternoon, when I awoke, my Angelique was nowhere to be found. I am no killer, but I fear the worst for her. Now either help me or stand aside!" At this point Karl attempts to bluff his way past the heroes, acting as though he considers their accusations ridiculous. He will ignore their demands to cooperate and ride on, intent on finding his beloved Angelique.

Karl von Salzburg, 0-level male human: AC 10; MV 12; hp 5; THACO 20; #AT 1 (fist); Dmg 1d2; SA nil; SD nil; SZ M (5' 10"); ML steady (12); Str 9, Dex 9, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 9, Cha 12; AL CE; XP 200.

The Salzburg Estate: If the heroes investigate Karl's home, they discover a rather elaborate lab with lots of medical tomes covering a wide range of subjects, including tissue preservation, limb grafting, and the theories of resuscitation. There is no direct evidence of Karl's foul play, however. He has been very careful to remove all remnants of his activities.

Bringing Things to a Head

One way or another, Angelique and Karl should be brought together. If the heroes have visited Angelique in Lelone before seeing Karl, then they'll know the amnesiac matches the image in Karl's locket, and they can convey her whereabouts to her husband. If, on the

other hand, they have met Karl before traveling to Lelone, then they'll know that Angelique is the woman in his locket. Either way, it makes perfect sense that the two must meet.

If the heroes want to take Angelique back to either Fortuna or the Salzburg Estate, Johann Kroenburg insists she ride with him in his horse-drawn carriage. That, of course, triggers her irrational fear. (See "zeitgebers" under "Construction.") Another means of travel must be found, for she will not set foot near the carriage. Coincidentally, this is the very same carriage that overran her—Kroenburg and his wife were returning from a party in Fortuna and their driver was drunk at the time. Not one of them recalls the event.

Once Karl and his reconstructed wife are brought together, Angelique recovers her memories with frightful results. She begins screaming uncontrollably in horror as the complete events unfold within her mind. Karl cannot comprehend her terror, but the more he tries to comfort his wife, the more irrational she becomes, until at last she faints. Upon awaking again, she sobs hysterically and thrashes about, totally revolted at her own existence. With many interruptions due to renewed panic, terror, and an inability to accept her condition, Angelique manages to reveal the truth to the heroes. Confronted with this, Karl breaks down and admits his role in the ghastly tale.

It comes to rest on the heroes' shoulders how to deal with Angelique. They may be of a mind to destroy her (after all, she is an abomination), but if you have worked on the players' emotions well enough, this should be a tough choice to make. On the other hand, the heroes might feel pity for poor Angelique, as it is certainly not her fault that she is stuck in these circumstances, and she seems to be a very good person at heart. Of course, it's going to take some doing to bring her out of despair and convince her that there is a life for her out there. To save her, they may have to find some means of erasing this damning knowledge from her mind.

Karl is quickly found guilty of the murders of each of the missing women and ordered put to death. He is consumed by despair over Angelique's rejection of him and does not care whether he lives or dies. He does help the constable find the rest of the missing bodies, as well as Angelique's discarded body parts.

Recurrence

If the setup above doesn't appeal to you, there are other ways to draw the heroes into the murder mystery. Perhaps one of the heroes has a female friend or lover who disappears along with Karl's other victims. Or perhaps the heroes are acquaintances of the Kroenburg family and have just arrived for a visit when Angelique is found. Alternatively, Karl von Salzburg might be related to a hero, who has come to visit him after a long absence.

AUTOMATIC MAN

I had so worked upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere . . . an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven . . .

—Edgar Allen Poe
“The Fall of the House of Usher”

BIOGRAPHY

The decaying shell of Lumley House slumps near the river's edge just beyond the town. Within its damp walls lie the rusting remains of Howard Lumley's finest achievement: the Automatic Man. Nearly a century has passed since its gears were stilled, yet no one has dared retrieve the once-celebrated servant. Those who do might discover that more than rain has seeped into the rotting timbers of Lumley House. . . .



Automatic Man

The Automatic Man

Mechanical Golem, Neutral Evil

Armor Class	-3	Str	23
Movement	0	Dex	10
Level/Hit Dice	13	Con	20
Hit Points	75	Int	10
THACO	7	Wis	8
Morale	20	Cha	n/a
No. of Attacks	varies	XP	15,000
Damage/Attack	4d10 or special		
Special Attacks	Steam blast; heat damage		
Special Defenses	+1 or better magical weapon to hit; immune to first- and second-level spells; regenerates 2 hp/round		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

Notes: Although the Automatic Man's control extends throughout the house, its true essence remains in the boiler tank in area 20. The numbers above apply in this room. Only here does the golem enjoy the benefit of its special defenses, and only damage to the boiler tank can whittle away its 75 hit points. (Certain “extensions” of the golem have separate statistics, noted during the adventure.)

Appearance

When Howard Lumley revealed the Automatic Man to the public, it was an elegant imitation of a human servant. It had a sleek metal body, a handsome porcelain face, and convincing glass eyes. Now, more than eighty years later, his creation is a ruined heap of rubbish. Its iron carriage is rusted and breached, and moldy tatters of once-fine livery cling to its surface. Through the gaping “wounds” inflicted by the terrified townsfolk so long ago, a calamity of gears and slimy rubber belts spill forth like entrails.

But this is a mere vestige of the Automatic Man. Today Lumley House is both the Automatic Man's mausoleum and an extension of its body. The manor's foundation has shifted over the years, and its roof has bent under countless thunderstorms, lending it the appearance of a rain-soaked hunchback. Its windows are cracked and dimmed with mud, and its once fabulous gargoyles are now bleak ornaments on its ruined husk.

AUTOMATIC MAN

Construction

Once a carefully crafted automaton, today the creature has an entire house for its body. The formerly extravagant manor looks normal, but its unusually thick walls house a variety of pneumatic ducts, steam pipes, water conduits, and mechanical devices. The motive power for the house comes from two sources: the gearbox and the boiler. Each lies in its own room in the cellar. The boiler is the key to its ultimate destruction.

Background

Howard Lumley built his own home near town nearly one hundred years ago. Lumley was known for marvels of engineering, ranging from aqueducts still in use today to gear-driven toys wrought of metal. His house was a marvel of engineering, with indoor plumbing, elevators, automatic doors and windows, and a series of fabulous fountains and animated statuary.

The story goes that one of Howard's creations, an "automated servant," malfunctioned and ran amok in the streets, murdering several people before retreating to the manor. When local authorities demanded that Lumley surrender the device, he refused, acting more like a protective parent than as the man responsible for such tragedy. A siege followed, and the berserk mechanical golem slew several more attackers and its own creator before being overcome. The townsfolk left the ruined golem where it fell, sealing Lumley House for good. Later that year, a powerful series of thunderstorms flooded the town. Lumley House sank partially into the earth, and the ensuing years have only exacerbated the damage. Today its grounds are broken and steeped in still green pools. Even after eighty years, the townspeople dread and shun the place.

The Automatic Man no longer resides in its original iron shell. Instead, its essence has seeped with the rain into the very heart of its mausoleum, Lumley House. In a tangled dell just outside of town, the house slumps under the weight of years and neglect. Its mechanical gardens and automatic staircases are caked with mud. Most of its expensive glass windows are cracked or completely shattered, and even the shutters seem to sag like tired eyelids.

Personality

Once pampered and loved by its creator, the Automatic Man was shocked when it saw Lumley returning home at the head of a mob. In the face of such betrayal, it murdered him. The golem never knew that Lumley was trying to outrun the other villagers in a vain attempt to protect his creation.

Despite the mob's best efforts, something of the golem's spirit lived on in his broken body. Now the soul of Lumley House, the Automatic Man hates all living creatures, blaming them for rejecting it and destroying

its first body. For eighty years, it has brooded over its betrayal and destruction, devising ways to torment and ultimately kill those who venture inside the manor. Since the heroes are unlikely to find a way in which to communicate with the Automatic Man, the creature's motives are likely to remain a mystery. Clever heroes might, of course, piece together the golem's personality through investigation and deduction.

Combat

The Automatic Man is not fully conscious when the heroes enter the House. Until someone disturbs the golem's original body, the place is relatively harmless. But once the body is disturbed in any way, the House awakens to terrible effect. It has no desire to see the heroes leave alive.

The adventure describes each room of the manor, including what assaults may occur. Several locations in the House are safe. Clever heroes may take refuge there before making their final attempt at escape.

SEEPAGE



Lumley House can appear in any Renaissance-level setting; Mordent, Richemulot, and Dementlieu are three good choices in RAVENLOFT. The character and place names fit Mordent best, but names are easy to change.

The adventure occurs when flooding is commonplace—either in spring, when the melting snow and rains swell the rivers, or summer, when heavy thunderstorms occur. To enhance the verisimilitude of this story, try to lay the groundwork in a previous gaming session. Let the streets become muddy, and mention the arrival of Oren Lumley (see below), the man who sends them into the manor.

Heroes who enter the House of Lumley should be at least 7th level if they wish to come out alive. If you'd like to run the adventure for less resilient adventurers, reduce the damage each room can inflict (especially the steam pipe attacks), as well as the payment Lumley offers. You may also have to downgrade the golem's defenses to give the heroes a fighting chance.

Note: Selected text that can be read aloud to players appears in italic type to conserve space.

The Adventure Begins

Howard's great-grandnephew, Oren Lumley, has recently arrived with papers to prove his ownership of Lumley House. He intends to drain the land and rebuild the manor for himself and his family. Unfortunately for young Lumley, the local workers refuse to even set foot on the grounds. Left with little alternative, Lumley posts a notice:

AUTOMATIC MAN

As the lawful holder of Lumley House, Mr. Oren Lumley seeks the assistance of one or more sturdy salvagers to enter the property and retrieve the remains of any and all mechanical devices which still reside within the property. Interested parties should inquire after Mr. Lumley at The Silver Dolphin Inn, on Seaside Street.

Thus far, no one has taken Oren up on his offer. He's staying at the inn. Heroes who inquire after him there encounter a slim, tall man with thinning hair and unusually long fingers. He produces a pair of tiny spectacles whenever he wishes to read. When asked about his notice, Lumley begins with the following tale:

"Perhaps you have heard of my ancestor, Howard Lumley. He was famous—some would say 'notorious'—for his mechanical inventions. Most were toys, really, but some had great scientific merit.

"Unfortunately, Uncle Howard was killed in an accident when a mechanical butler called the Automatic Man ran amok. The townspeople destroyed it, but supposedly the rusty remains are still in the house, along with other inventions. Many could be quite valuable, and I should like them all removed before hiring work crews to begin the renovation.

"That's where you come in. I want you to bring out the remaining gadgets, starting with the ruined hulk of that old butler. Once the locals see it is harmless, I can begin renovation. What do you say?"

Lumley initially offers the heroes 300 gp to retrieve the Automatic Man and salvage other valuables. Those who drive a hard bargain find that Lumley is willing to pay up to 500 gp, though to bring him to such a sum requires good roleplaying and persuasive arguments. Should the heroes initially refuse the job and allow a week to pass before approaching Lumley again, he raises his offer a bit more. (Choose a sum that's high enough to entice your heroes without raising eyebrows or unbalancing your campaign.)

If asked why none of the locals will do this job, Oren smiles condescendingly and says they're a superstitious lot, still frightened by the admittedly horrible events of 80 years past. He acknowledges that the "accident" was quite dreadful. He may even admit that others beyond his ancestor died. However, he protests that there is nothing uncanny about the Automatic Man—it is merely a sophisticated toy. In any event, the thing was destroyed. He admits, however, that he does not know what kind of traps or contraptions Lumley may have built in the house. Most, he imagines, no longer function. Still, it could be dangerous work—and that's why he's paying so well.

Preliminary Investigation

Heroes who wish to investigate Lumley House before entering can gain insights from several sources.

Local Gossip: If approached pleasantly (with a successful Charisma check, perhaps), any resident of

town older than fifty years might relate the tale of the berserk Automatic Man. They'll confirm the servant was destroyed, but that doesn't mean they think the house is safe. These days, parents forbid their children to approach Lumley House. The place is cloaked in an air of foreboding danger.

Town Records: Should any hero delve into the town records, he or she learns that the house indeed remains the property of the Lumley family. Apparently, Oren is the first to claim it. Documents filed during the House's construction make note of a moving staircase, elevator, and dumbwaiter, in addition to an elaborate network of water and steam pipes throughout the house and extending into the Mechanical Garden. The power source for the entire estate was a huge boiler located in the basement.

If you like, any hero might befriend the town clerk, Nicolas Huxley. Impressing this baby-faced young man is as simple as speaking kindly. He values sincerity, so crass attempts at flattery (a failed Charisma check, false roleplaying) can put him off. Success indicates that the hero uncovers an actual floor plan of Lumley House. In this case, show a copy of the Lumley House map to players.

Nicolas is useful in one other way: When Howard Lumley was laid to rest, his keys were left in the clerk's office. If Nicolas is encouraged to be helpful, he may discover the keys and let the heroes borrow them. Oren Lumley assumes the keys have been lost.

The Guardian: An old priest who lives just beyond the town has ties to the Order of the Guardian, a secretive sect devoted to the destruction of evil artifacts. (The accessory *Champions of the Mists* describes the order more fully.) Though generally aloof, the old priest may relate a story he knows about Harold Lumley: The inventor was desperate to create mechanical servants that were indistinguishable from humans. He managed to construct relatively crude devices powered by a huge boiler, but he couldn't build a sufficiently small "heart chamber" to power his Automatic Man. Then Lumley learned of an arcane tome that might answer his problem, and he paid a Vistani clan to steal it for him. The thieves smuggled the tome from the domain of Lamordia. A year later, Lumley created the Automatic Man.

Lumley House

Hunched near the base of a round hill, the house is a relatively small manor of only two stories with an attic and a large stone cellar. Its walls were once finely painted, but now the plaster sloughs off in leprous sheaves. The gaping wounds expose the raw brick beneath. Dark cracks scatter through the material like cancerous arteries.

Where the boards have fallen away, the blank surfaces of the windows stare out, gray with mud and dust. The front door is still boarded tightly.

The Grounds

The Lumley House grounds are wild, green, and tangled. The earth is soft and wet from proximity to the river, where weeping willows steep their tresses in the cool water. Birds fill the trees, and pigeons roost in the manor's eaves.

- 1. Perimeter:** More ornamental than defensive, the stone wall and its rusting iron gate stand 3 feet high.
- 2. Mechanical Garden:** At first glance, the overgrown statuary and reflecting pool seem perfectly ordinary. Those who peer closely at the statues see smooth cracks where the figures' limbs and necks are articulated for movement. Usually, these figures are inert, but once the golem awakens, they become deadly. The statues cannot leave their bases, so heroes who keep their distance are in little danger. The golem is crafty, however. It causes the statues to move enticingly, hoping to draw a victim within 3 or 4 feet before unleashing a stony assault. Each statue attacks with the Automatic Man's THAC0, yet causes only 1d10 damage, is AC 0, has 30 hp, and enjoys none of the golem's special attacks or defenses.

Statue A: A merman stabs his trident at a serpentine monster, which in turn rears back with a furious hissing.

Statue B: A giant crab.

Statue C: Five tentacles of a huge octopus rise out of a sea cave now choked with weeds.

Statue D: Three nereids ride their sea-horse mounts on the imagined waves of the reflecting pool.

Statue E: In the center of the reflecting pool stands a statue of dozens of dolphins, sea nymphs, and other creatures, all rising with open mouths, from which water once sprayed into the basin. Those coming within 10 feet of the central sculpture of the pool are subject to a scalding blast of rust-stained water that inflicts 4d10 points of damage. Victims who make a successful save vs. breath weapon suffer only half damage.

Ground Floor

Patches of mold and fungus are common throughout the ground floor; all the rooms are damp. Rangers or others with tracking skill can detect the spoor of rats.

- 3. Foyer:** The front door is boarded and locked. Removing the boards requires four successful open doors checks. Well-prepared heroes might use a prying tool, which grants them a -4 bonus to the die roll. Even by day, the foyer is dark.

The grand foyer is wide and high, with a full balcony on the second floor. On all walls, wide doors open into adjoining rooms, while a smaller servant's door stands discreetly in one corner. Thick carpeting covers the floor, and stenciled paper decorates the walls. Both are dotted with patches of mold and fungus. A damp, earthy odor weighs heavily in the air.

Across from the entrance, a wide stairway curves from the eastern wall up to the northwestern balcony.

Suspended just above the balcony's railings is a dusty chandelier secured by a chain.

The mold and fungus in the room are harmless. The shelf fungus is even edible, though hardly tasty.

Any dwarf or a hero with the engineering proficiency can note, upon examining the unusually bulky staircase, that the entire construction is designed to move. Hidden gears and belts operate the device, powered by mechanical trains concealed within the walls and floor, leading down to the giant gearbox (area 19). Until the heroes enter area 10 and disturb the golem, the stairs remain inert.

That changes, of course, after the golem wakes. Whenever the heroes are elsewhere, the golem activates the stairs to create a racket. The long-neglected engine now shudders and clacks. The golem stops whenever the heroes enter the foyer or the balcony, hoping to lure some or all onto the staircase. When a victim is in its trap, the golem activates the stairs again. Heroes on the moving steps must make successful Dexterity checks at a +4 penalty or tumble down, losing 4d6 hit points from the fall and the steps' active battering. Success indicates that the hero has leaped back from the stairs or onto the banister.

The chandelier, however, is another matter. The golem can raise it, lower it, and swing it east and west (with a second chain, horizontal). The "crystal wrecking ball" can strike any hero on the eastern portion of the stairs or on the western portion of the balcony (damage 2d6), or crash down upon anyone in the 40-foot-square area beneath it (damage 4d6).

A hero can still the chandelier by severing the main chain with a successful attack (AC 1, hp 6).

- 4. Ballroom:** Despite the dirty glass, this large, high-ceilinged chamber is reasonably well illuminated in the afternoon. *The parquet floor was once glorious. Now its geometrical patterns are smudged with grime, and the wood has warped and sagged in places. The wood paneling is likewise dulled and faded, and the brass sconces along their lengths have turned black.*

The levers for raising and lowering the chandeliers are in a recessed box in the north wall, by the servants' entrance. The box is concealed (as a concealed door) but not strictly secret. Two of the levers no longer function; the gears to which they are linked have long since rusted fast. Pulling the third lever causes the southernmost chandelier to descend slowly, until it stops a mere two feet from the floor. Inquisitive heroes might note that all of the candles in all of the chandeliers have melted completely.

If awake, the golem cannot swing these chandeliers from side to side, but it can drop them on anyone standing below, attacking with a THAC0 of 7 for 3d6 hp damage. Only the southernmost chandelier can be raised again for further attacks; the chains of the others snap after only one attack each.

- 5. Garden Walk:** This porch was once completely enclosed by glass, almost all of which lies in shards

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upon the floor, mingling with the windblown leaves and other detritus. Weathered but still beautiful large pots line the edges of the walkway.

The garden walk is safe from the golem's influence; it has no mechanical devices.

6. Hallway: Rather than conceal the steam pipes that vein the house, Lumley made them ornamental and used their exposure to warm the manor. Thus, the copper pipes run along the bases of the walls, keeping the house warm in winter.

When the golem awakens, it can control the course of steam running through its "veins." For the first few minutes of the golem's awareness, the pipes rattle and hiss, creating a commotion that can be heard (if not seen) throughout the house. When heroes enter this particular hallway, the golem bursts the joints of six long pipes, at first blasting anyone in the corridor with scalding steam for 4d6 hp damage (save vs. breath weapon for half damage). Afterward, the golem uses the pipes as weapons, gaining six attacks per round and causing 1d6 hp damage with a successful attack (THACO 7). The pipes (AC 1, hp 6) suffer no damage from nonmagical slashing or piercing weapons, 1 hp damage per strike from a nonmagical bludgeoning weapon, and full damage from magical weapons of any sort.

7. Kitchen: The spacious counters, sinks, and cabinets of this room are covered in dust. Pots, pans, and other kitchen implements are scattered everywhere. On the east wall, the box for a dumbwaiter lies exposed, its door hanging awkwardly from the hinges.

The sink has both hot and cold running water. The golem can animate the hot water spigot to rise like a serpent, striking anyone in the west half of the kitchen for 1d6 hp damage. It can also spew a ruddy blast of scalding water at a single opponent for 4d10 hp damage, though it can do this only once before rupturing. Else the faucet strikes until the heroes retreat or destroy it (AC 1, hp 10).

For a description of the dumbwaiter, see *area 11*.

8. Dining Room: The following description assumes that the heroes enter the dining room before the golem awakens: *A long rectangular table stands in the center of this room. Fine table settings are strewn across its surface, and some lie scattered upon the floor along with the silverware. Nasty lumps of what must have been food adhere to some of the serving platters, too hardened for even the most determined rats.*

Anyone peering under the table can readily spot the bolts securing it to the floor. The secret door is less obvious. A lever in a concealed box on the north wall activates a large trapdoor, which opens to receive the descending table, then closes again. Unlike most devices in the house, this one still works perfectly.

When the Automatic Man awakens, it retracts the table to create the illusion that the table has vanished. Heroes who specifically examine the floor might notice (on a successful Intelligence check) that the area where the table once stood is considerably cleaner than the rest of the floor. Those foolish enough to walk over this

area are subject to an attack. The golem opens the trapdoor suddenly, thrusting the table upward to strike victims for 2d6 hp damage, and then closes the trap just as suddenly, trying to trap victims beneath the floor, along with the table (save vs. petrification to avoid). Trapped heroes must rely on others for help, as they are pinned by an effective Strength of 23.

Hacking through the floor with axes is a blunt but effective means of rescuing a trapped companion in 5d4 rounds, as long as the rescuers are careful to avoid chopping directly over the victim. Other means of rescue include the use of a *knock* or *warp wood* spell.

9. Stairs: These narrow stairways do not move like those in the foyer. The strange ornamental steam pipes found in *area 6* also run along the walls here; the golem can attack with them in an identical manner.

First Floor

These rooms are dank but not as sodden as those below. Near the windows, rain has seeped in to warp the wood and damage the floors. Except where noted, this damage does not pose a danger to the heroes.

10. Servants' Quarters: Howard did not furnish these rooms with his marvels, so they're safe.

Each room contains a narrow dust-covered bed; a modest wardrobe with men's or women's clothing, a table with a grimy pitcher and basin, and personal items of little value (combs, an empty purse . . .).

11. Master Bedroom: A canopied bed dominates this room, which is heavily adorned with drapes and tapestries. Three faded paintings hang on the wall.

An automatic dumbwaiter leads down to the kitchens below. Pulling the lever before the Automatic Man awakens reveals only the empty shaft and the long belt that lowers the dumbwaiter. Later, the Automatic Man can cause the box to rise and fall at alarming speeds. Fortunately, only a fool who sticks his or her hand inside the shaft is subject to the 3d6 hp damage that the hurtling box can cause.

The bed is the most valuable furnishing. Within the top bureau drawer lie three bejeweled rings (100 gp, 250 gp, 375 gp) among other worthless trinkets and personal items.

The wardrobe is full of fine but rather modestly tailored clothing for a thin human male. The fashion, interestingly, has come around again. The clothes are too moth-eaten to be valuable.

12. Guest Bedrooms: Each of these rooms resembles a bedchamber but appears to lack a bed. An elegantly carved wardrobe stands in one corner, and beneath the curtained window stands a fine table with a wash basin and a white pitcher. A small table stands against another wall, and on the floor beside it lie a broken vase and a few thin strands of dead flowers.

Above the nightstand is a small, concealed door that hides a lever. Pulling this lever before the Automatic Man awakens evokes an audible snap, and a seam on

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the wall becomes visible. The room has a wall bed. The mechanism that once lowered the bed to the floor is now inert, but the heroes can pull down the bed with a simple Strength check.

Should the heroes enter this room unaware after the Automatic Man is awake, the golem attacks once by slamming down the bed, causing 3d6 hp damage on a successful strike. The force of the attack ruins the folding mechanism forever. It won't move again.

13. Smoking Room: Three comfortable couches and four stuffed chairs surround a low table in the center of this room. Oil paintings and cameos fill the walls, and a half-dozen little tables support curios, ashtrays, miniature busts, and other *object d'art*. Unfortunately, the shattered windows have let in rain, and the southernmost couch and carpet are fuzzy with gray mold. The odor of decay is faint but vaguely repulsive.

While the mold itself is no threat, the dampness of the floor is a sign of real weakness. Anyone weighing more than 100 pounds has a 50% chance of plunging through the floor of this room, into *area 6* below. Victims suffer 2d6 hp damage from the fall and the passage through the splintered floor. After someone falls, there's a 50% chance that 1d4 pieces of furniture also plunge through the rotten floor, inflicting an additional 2d6 hp damage each when they crash into the victim.

14. Bath: In addition to the luxury of indoor plumbing, this bath also features a retracting wardrobe

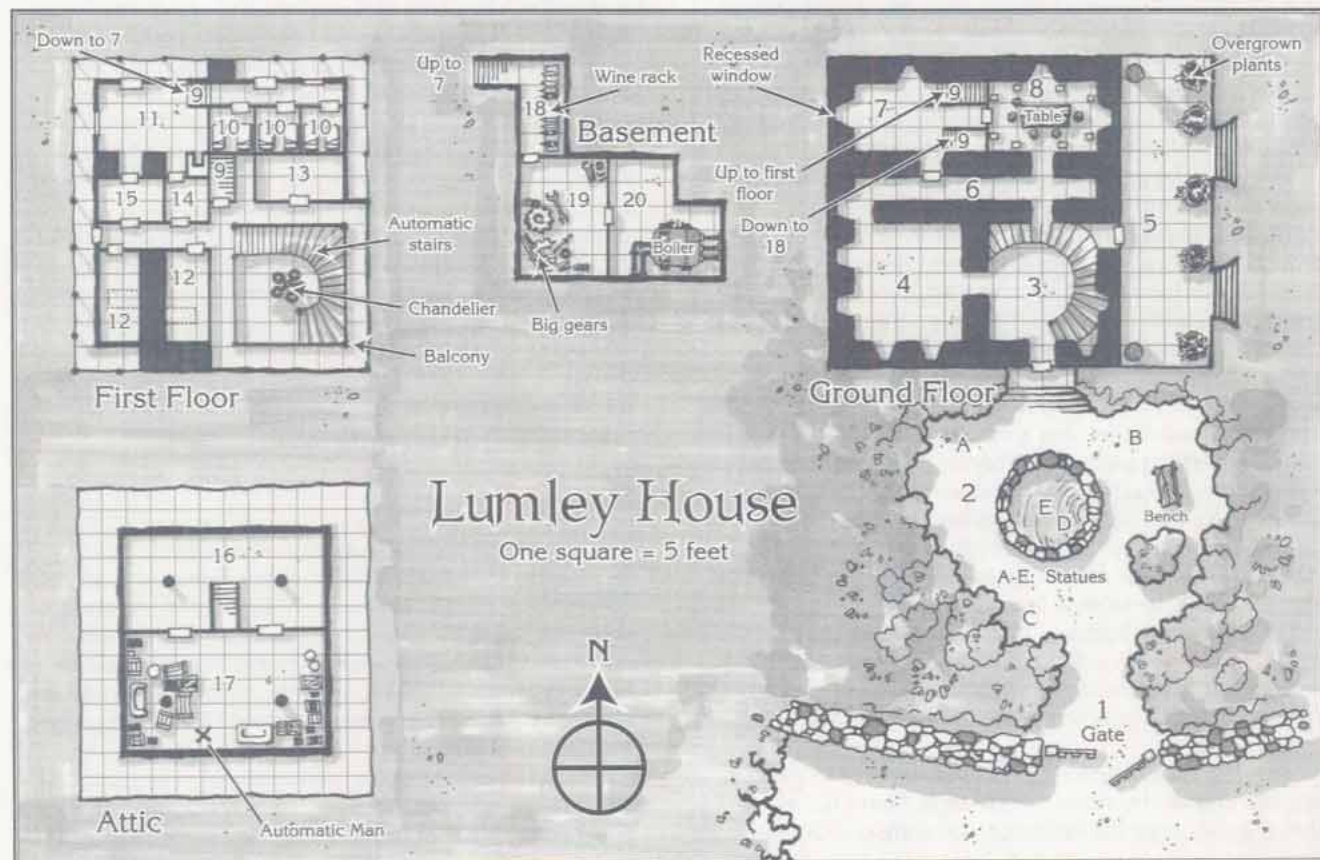
and a steam chamber, which is essentially a porcelain chair surrounded by a lockable box with a neck-sized opening for the occupant's head. The wardrobe is not a threat unless a hero walks right into it to stand amid the moving clothes pegs (1d2 damage). The steam chamber is likewise inoffensive, unless someone actually sits within its box once the golem awakens. At that point, the golem closes and locks the box, trapping the unfortunate victim inside.

A thief can pick the lock, but unless another hero stands ready to open it immediately, the golem simply relocks it. A *knock* spell is especially useful in freeing a captive. A victim also can break free by making a successful bend bars/lift gates roll.

For each round trapped within the steam chamber, the victim suffers a cumulative 1d4 hp damage from the increasingly forceful and scalding steam, to a maximum 4d4 hp damage per round.

15. Library: This small chamber is sumptuously furnished with stuffed chairs, carved tables, and elegant lamps with richly colored glass shades. Four bookshelves bow under the weight of years, and on them rest several dozen books.

Most of the books concern mechanical constructions, architectural theory, and engineering. With the exception of the *manual of golems* described below, the collection is worth approximately 800 gp. Anyone studying the entire collection for at least eight months



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can gain the engineering proficiency without having to spend a proficiency slot. Readers who already have the proficiency gain a permanent +3 bonus when using it.

Within a closed, unlocked drawer lies the *manual of golems* that Lumley used to “perfect” his Automatic Man. The cover reads “*Notes on Animations* by Creighton Arkwright.” Whole passages diverge from scientific knowledge and seem transcribed from some other source, not cited. Only someone with the engineering proficiency can understand most of the book, and only someone with the spellcraft proficiency can use the tome to construct a golem. Creating a mechanical golem requires six months’ work and 120,000 gp in preparation and materials. Unlike a normal *manual of golems*, this one does not render itself to ash upon the golem’s completion; instead, the final ritual demands a darker sacrifice, one that immediately requires a powers check.

Between the book’s pages lie a few loose sheets with Lumley’s notes, along with a letter from the Order of the Guardians. It is a warning to Howard Lumley, dated three months before Lumley’s death.

Attic

Despite the rotting roof, the attic is much drier than the floors below. In fact, it’s hot and stuffy, since the windows are closed and intact, creating a virtual oven.

16. Workshop: Arcane diagrams cover the walls of this room, neatly pinned to the unfinished pine boards. Each drawing depicts the workings of a gear, a joint, a socket, or some other mechanical device. Some are as simple as dumbwaiters, while others are sophisticated contraptions. Almost half the drawings are devoted to the construction of a manlike mechanism.

In the center of the room stand two large tables covered with unfinished mechanical devices.

Howard Lumley built most of his inventions here, though the larger, more architectural devices were created with the help of dwarven sculptors and engineers. Much of the equipment on the two tables was devoted to the design of the Automatic Man. Heroes who pick over its remains find a carved wooden arm with articulated joints and fingers, an unfinished porcelain skull containing a single rolling eye, and other mildly unsettling pieces of artificial anatomy. Beyond that, spring-locked hinges are abundant, along with a few gadgets that defy identification.

The room itself is dangerous only after the Automatic Man awakens. If the heroes linger for more than one round after escaping the storage room, they suffer the same splintering beam attacks as in that room. See area 17.

17. Storage: Bare timbers form the walls and ceiling, and vague shapes fill this dark, stifling room. The place smells of pinesap, and the dryness almost chafes the skin.

To either side, tarpaulins smother boxes and barrels, unused chairs and other furnishings. Many have been thrust away from the center of the room, creating an

irregular path from the doorway to the far wall. There, crumpled upon the floor, lies some jumble of machinery.

Any hero listening for noises detects the scratching and cooing of pigeons on the roof. The birds remain unless started by a sudden loud noise.

The jumble across the room is indeed the ruined remains of the Automatic Man (see “appearance” at the start of this chapter). Cautious heroes might well attack or at least poke the ruined machine, but it does nothing to defend itself. It seems to be a harmless, empty shell.

Upon any disturbance of its former body, the spirit of the Automatic Man rouses from its slumber. The pigeons on the roof take wing. At the same time, several dozen black rats scurry out of the cellar, heading for the kitchen and the first two levels of the house. They’re not deadly, but their appearance might prompt a surprise roll or distract the heroes from a genuine threat. The panicked rats look for cover anywhere they can, including running up cloaks, staves, and even trouser legs.

Rats: AC 7; MV 16; HD 1/4; hp 2 each; THACO 20; #AT 1 (bite); Dmg 1; SA disease; SZ T (8" long); ML unreliable (4); Int animal (1); XP 7 each.

One round after the golem awakens, the door to area 17 slams shut and locks. Throughout the house, long-dormant gears begin to turn, belts start to hum, and automatic doors and shutters flap madly as the Automatic Man stretches its newly discovered limbs.

The door can be picked or broken down normally, but on the third round after the Automatic Man has been disturbed, the dry timbers of the room begin to creak and twist. On the fourth round, a single board snaps under the pressure, flying up with force enough to cause 2d10 hp damage should anyone be unfortunate enough to stand in its way (on a roll of 1 on 1d12). More likely, the splintered beam serves only as a warning, for on the fifth round, three floor beams snap, sending splinters and boards flying in all directions. At this point, and for the next three rounds, everyone in the room must save vs. petrification or suffer 3d6 hp damage each round. Those huddling behind storage crates or shields gain a +4 saving throw bonus.

Basement

The key to the heroes’ success—the heart of the beast—lies in the stone cellar of the House of Lumley.

18. Wine Cellar: Several broken bottles and dark stains on the floor may suggest otherwise, but this cool, dank room cannot become animate. A potential sanctuary, it contains 44 bottles of wine. Half have soured and are undrinkable. The remainder could be sold together for 220 gp, though Oren Lumley is the rightful owner.

19. Gearbox: After the Automatic Man wakes, this room rages with mechanical noise. When the heroes approach the room, however, it falls deathly silent. The

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golem knows the gearbox is one of its most vulnerable parts, and it hopes to frighten intruders away. Those who enter anyway are in for a ferocious fight.

Narrow, muddy windows allow only the barest light to enter the cellar. The first room is filled from floor to ceiling with huge iron gears and axles linked to bars and pipes that vanish into wide slots on the far wall. The path between the gears' teeth is narrow, and several inches of rust-colored water cover the floor.

If the Automatic Man's body has yet to be disturbed, intrusions into this room activate the spirit. Several dozen black rats scurry up the heroes' clothes (see area 17 notes). Using its ability to create noise and havoc, the golem does everything it can to draw the heroes upstairs—away from the boiler room in which its vulnerable heart lies.

The pervasive dampness causes two key effects: Damage from fire-based spells is reduced 1 point per die. And the power of any electrical attack is conducted throughout the room, causing half damage to all inside, even those outside the area of effect.

The gearworks are formidable, but the Automatic Man can't lash out with them offensively. Their movement serves to prevent passage to the boiler room. Thieves can slip through the grinding gears and crankshafts on a successful move silently roll with a +10 percent bonus. Other characters must succeed at a Dexterity check with a -4 penalty. In either case, a hero must make three successful checks to cross the room. Failure at any time indicates that a hero has brushed up against a bit of sharp, moving machinery and suffers 1d10 points of damage. Those damaged by gears must save vs. paralyzation or be dragged into the works to suffer 4d10 hp damage per round. Victims so trapped may try to make another successful move silently or Dexterity check to free themselves, or companions may do the same to save them.

Reward heroes who make valiant efforts to wreck the gearbox by slowing or stopping the gears—temporarily, at least. Ideally, it should take a visit to the Boiler Room to completely destroy this creature.

20. Boiler Room: While the gearbox is the engine of the house, the boiler is its power source, its heart. Normally, this room is pitch black, save for an eerie orange glow near the center of the floor. Read the following when someone shines a light:

Water drips from the walls and ceiling in this stone chamber, standing several inches deep on the slick floor. The heat is stifling. Nearly half the room is filled by the bulk of a black iron tank. Rust trails ooze like wounds from its thousand rivets, and scabby patches of rust fester on its surface. Despite these obvious signs of decay, the boiler hums, throbbing with the pulse of life. Whatever fuel once filled its firebox is now replaced with a hellish orange glow.

The golem has few defenses left here. Desperately, it tries to drive the heroes away by focusing its energy on raising the boiler temperature. Within one round of

entry, the heroes find the boiler room uncomfortably hot. On the second round, all must save vs. spells or suffer 1d4 hp damage. This heat damage increases by 1 point for each round the heroes remain here, to a maximum of 1d4+8 hp damage on round ten. If the heroes are still here then, see below.

While the tank itself cannot attack, the heroes might sever one or more of the pipes that converge along its body. Each pipe can suffer only 6 hp damage before becoming detached. Once a pipe is severed, it can make a single steam attack, causing 4d10 hp damage. After that, it can "bash and burn" for 1d6 hp damage, plus an extra point for each round of heating.

On round ten, if the heroes have not retreated or destroyed the boiler tank, it ceases all attacks and begins to overheat. The light from its coal box grows even more intense, and the tank begins to bulge with the pressure of its superheated contents. If three or more of its twelve pipes are still attached, the entire house begins to shudder as the steam pressure builds. The heroes have six rounds to escape before a catastrophic explosion causes 10d6 hp damage to all within the boiler room, 6d6 hp damage to all within the gearbox, and 3d6 hp damage to all within the rest of the house.

Aftermath

If the heroes destroy the boiler tank before it explodes, the house is spared. Of course if they don't, the house will be destroyed. Oren Lumley still owns the land, but he will have to raze the structure before building again.

As a man of his word, Oren pays the fee even if the tank explodes. He won't feel he owes the heroes any favors, however, and he won't contribute to the furtherance of their good names.

The Tome

Should the heroes let on that they have discovered the *manual of golems*, the Order of the Guardians offers them up to 1,000 gp to surrender it so the Guardians might destroy it. Oren Lumley claims ownership of the book and all other objects within the house, but he will relinquish it for as little as 500 gp if the heroes have done a good job, or for as much as 2,000 gp if they have managed to destroy the house.

Recurrence

If the heroes escape Lumley House without destroying the boiler tank, then the Automatic Man lives on, gradually becoming even more capable of controlling the functions of the house. Within a month, it can repair the wooden, stone, and metal structures to give an outward appearance of habitation, hoping to lure unwary travelers inside. It can do nothing about the draperies, furniture, and plants within and around the house, so some clues remain to warn the cautious.

AZENWRATH

Oh, come with old *Rh*ayyam, and leave the *W*ise to talk;
one thing is certain, that *L*ife flies
One thing is certain, and the *R*est is *L*ies; the *F*lower that
once has blown forever dies.

—Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám (translated by Edward Fitzgerald)

BIOGRAPHY



Ensnared by its own hysteria, the community of Canondale barricades itself against the surrounding forest. Over the past week, the villagers have seen spring-born leaves turn gray and fall prematurely, and have suffered lashings from briefly animate branches. The source of Canondale's troubles is not what the harried villagers suspect, however, for something darker moves with night's wind. These events are but a herald of the destruction to come.

Azenwrath

Spell-Rune Golem, Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class	0	Str	23
Movement	12	Dex	18
Level/Hit Dice	12	Con	20
Hit Points	87	Int	10*
THACO	8	Wis	2
Morale	19	Cha	4
No. of Attacks	2	XP	12,000
Damage/Attack	3d8/3d8 (fists)		
Special Attacks	Animate trees, control papers, use scrolls		
Special Defenses	+3 or better magical weapon to hit; immune to poison, disease, and mind-affecting spells; half damage from cold- and electricity-based spells		
Special Vulnerabilities	blessed axe, fire, continual light		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

* Intelligence may drop; see "Construction" for details.

Appearance

The spell-rune golem resembles an enormous twig-and-paper scarecrow. Its limbs and torso are thick bundles of leafless branches covered with a skin of perforated and torn papers. A web of roots spreads over and under the papers, holding the creature together. Vaguely humanoid in appearance, it is tall and lanky, with a fan of branches for a head, and disproportionate limbs

whose many joints are oddly placed. From its head dangles a curious assortment of wooden amulets, rings, and bracelets, all tightly ensnared in a thorny tangle.

Construction

This golem is like none van Richten ever encountered: it is its own creator. Once the evil treant Azenwrath, it was felled and hacked to bits by a wizard. The smaller severed branches kept their form, but the rest of the treant's wood became carved objects or pieces of paper, usually magical. With some shred of sentience remaining, Azenwrath eventually began reassembling itself as a golem, steadily reclaiming the stolen pieces of its former body. It has been tracking them for more than a century, but the job is not yet done.

Scattered throughout Ravenloft, bits of the creature exist as spell scrolls, statuettes, wands, rods, staves, rings, bracers, and the like. The spell-rune golem senses the direction of its closest pieces, but not the exact location. Once it comes within 50 miles of a lost part, the golem can animate it. Items tremble and issue unintelligible whispers, while scripted paper suddenly rewrites itself with words describing the golem's emotions—including "I'm near," and "Kill you all." In its feral state, the words are simply "die, die, die . . ."

If the golem is close enough, even paper from another source may behave in this fashion. Azenwrath can animate and control any magical scroll within 10 yards. And if it's so inclined, it can add these scrolls, or even a piece of ordinary paper, to its form.

It is not mere desire that drives Azenwrath to reclaim its parts; it is a desperate need. For every month the golem cannot reclaim or ingest a portion of itself, it loses 1 point of Intelligence. The creature becomes highly emotional and reacts to stimuli like a rampaging animal; it will destroy anything that earns its attention, good or bad. The more Intelligence it loses, the more vicious it becomes. Once Azenwrath claims any piece of itself, it regains 1 point of Intelligence per day. If magic infuses that lost portion, the golem immediately returns to its normal state at a cost of whatever magic was once present in the item (with exception to scrolls, which still retain their spells).

The quest to reabsorb or reclaim its parts sustains this golem entirely; it has no other biological concerns.

AZENWRATH

Sages can only speculate what might happen if the golem ever reclaims its last available piece. But since some portions have undoubtedly been destroyed, it may simply search forever.

Zeitgeber: Azenwrath has a unique zeitgeber, known only to a few. Provided the creature is not yet engaged in combat, a *continual light* spell enraptures it. Somewhere within its shattered memories, the golem remembers standing under the sun as a true treant, for it did not always dwell in Ravenloft, and it was not always evil. It recalls basking in the sun's healing rays and feeling warmth spreading throughout its limbs and trunk like blood coursing through a human body. The sun of Ravenloft feels far colder than the sun of its memory, and only *continual light* reminds the golem that there were happier days before the Mists brought it to this forsaken place. This spell draws Azenwrath to it like the proverbial moth, distracting it until the golem discovers the light is fake, or until somebody attacks it. *Continual light* is a good way to draw the creature into an ambush, though the first fool who attacks it will earn its full attention.

Background

Long ago, before the Mists carried Azenwrath into Ravenloft, this creature was a powerful treant living outside the Druid's sacred grove. Some whisper that he was the grandfather of all oaks and that all trees in the forest came from his roots. Then the Mists drifted into the grove and seized him, making Azenwrath the first of his kind in this plagued realm.

He took root in Forlorn, and without the natural soil of his birth, he went mad. It was not long before his physical form mirrored the deterioration of his mind. His once magnificent limbs atrophied and became brittle skeletal caricatures, while his sap turned into black oil that polluted the air.

Azenwrath's tortured existence lasted many decades before a wizard named Kyall discovered him. By this point, the treant's once-fertile roots had germinated Death's Head Trees and Quickwoods. In a savage battle, Kyall killed Azenwrath and cut him down. Tristan ApBlanc, the Darklord of Forlorn, allowed the wizard to leave his domain with the dead treant, who had proven troublesome before. Later Kyall sought the aid of a Rokushima paper maker, who turned the treant's wood into sheets of paper.

Over the remaining years, Kyall sold the papers across Ravenloft to finance his experiments. For himself, however, he set aside one stack to script his spells, and kept the loose branches to make wands and staves. That was his folly, however, for the spells he inscribed upon the paper awoke a latent spark of sentience in Azenwrath's remains and animated them. Whether it was the will of Ravenloft's dark powers or an *animate dead* spell that did the trick, what emerged was a shadow of Azenwrath's former personality, distilled in-

sanity peppered with motes of pure hatred. The now-sentient parchment instinctually unleashed a *fireball* spell stored upon it into Kyall's face, killing him instantly.

Moving under their own power, the bundles of branches formed a skeleton of wood bound together at the joints with tightly wrapped paper. The skeletal limbs, digits and thorns then skewered the remaining sheets, like a branch impaling its own leaves, and departed into Ravenloft's eerie night, toward the hundreds of distant echoes sounded by its various parts. Thus has Azenwrath existed for more than a century, wandering the forests of the growing world, driven by a need to be whole again.

Personality

The spell-rune golem is a creature of concentrated emotions, all negative; there are no nuances or subtle aspects to its nature. More so than others of the Created, it follows its most violent tendencies to the fullest. Azenwrath is single-minded in all pursuits. If attacked, it will fight its assailants with the utmost fury until it either slays them or they escape. The golem is not evil, *per se*; it is rage incarnate, fueled by bitter frustration. Its memories are a pile of broken glass, each piece part of a fragmented puzzle that it can never solve; compounding that anger is the fact that its body is as segmented as its memories. Scattered and brutalized,



AZENWRATH

Azenwrath is a shattered toy put back together by an insane child. How maddening it must be to be trapped in a mutilated body broken a hundred times over, to know that you are not mentally or physically whole in moments of perfect lucidity.

Combat

Azenwrath's combat abilities reflect the strengths and weaknesses of both golems and treants, sometimes to formidable effect. Each round, the golem can make two attacks—inflicting 3d8 points of damage with a blow, or using a special ability, or a combination of the two. Like most golems, it is immune to toxins, disease, and mind- or life-affecting spells—including, in this case, *warp wood*. Only +3 or better magical weapons can harm it. It does not age or breathe, and receives a +4 bonus to saves vs. physical damage. There's one exception: a *blessed axe* does not need a +3 bonus to hit and inflicts normal damage.

Fire also hurts Azenwrath; attacks of this nature gain a +4 bonus and +1 extra damage die. Further, the golem suffers a -4 penalty to saving throws against fire. Cold and electricity cause half damage.

Because of its treant past, Azenwrath can control up to two trees at a range of 60 yards. Once it comes within 50 miles of a portion of itself, it can also control trees near that piece—though from this extreme distance, the affected trees cannot walk. However, they can still strike with branches or roots like a mature treant. The animated trees age prematurely, spanning a year of life in a week.

The spell-rune golem can also animate and control magical scrolls within 10 yards of its assembled body. It uses this ability to unleash spells from whatever paper it controls, making it dangerous for spell-casting foes.

The golem's most fearsome magic, however, comes from the spells inscribed on its own paper skin. Azenwrath recognizes and uses scrolls as its own "flesh," whether the paper actually belongs to it or not. Subsequently, it can unleash spells from these scrolls whenever it wishes. Although it requires one action to do so, the golem simply wills the spell free. It requires no incantations or gestures, simply a moment of concentration.

The scrolls on its body contain the following wizard spells: 1st—*color spray, dancing lights, grease, magic missile*; 2nd—*blur, darkness, invisibility, stinking cloud*; 3rd—*fireball, gust of wind, hold person, lightning bolt, wrathform*.

As noted under "Construction," Azenwrath is fascinated by *continual light*. If confronted by this spell, it will ignore everything else around it and go toward the light (it has enough sense not to walk off cliffs to do so, however). Attacking the golem at this time counts as a surprise round, though the first person to hit it is likely to earn the creature's full anger. When struck, Azenwrath fights back, attacking until that first foe is dead. While it may lash out at other targets, it incurs a

-2 attack penalty since it is concentrating on a single enemy. This *zeitgeber* does not affect the golem if the spell is cast during the middle of combat.

THE LESSER OF MANY EVILS



his adventure is designed for character levels 7 to 10. The party should wield at least one +3 weapon. Tips for increasing or decreasing the adventure's difficulty are detailed further on.

"The Lesser of Many Evils" relies on suspense.

Azenwrath does not actually appear until the end of the scenario, but wherever it goes, the events that herald its arrival create a stir. Trees flare to life, papers rewrite themselves, and odd whispers issue forth from objects concealed in drawers. Such foreboding elements play a key role in the adventure.

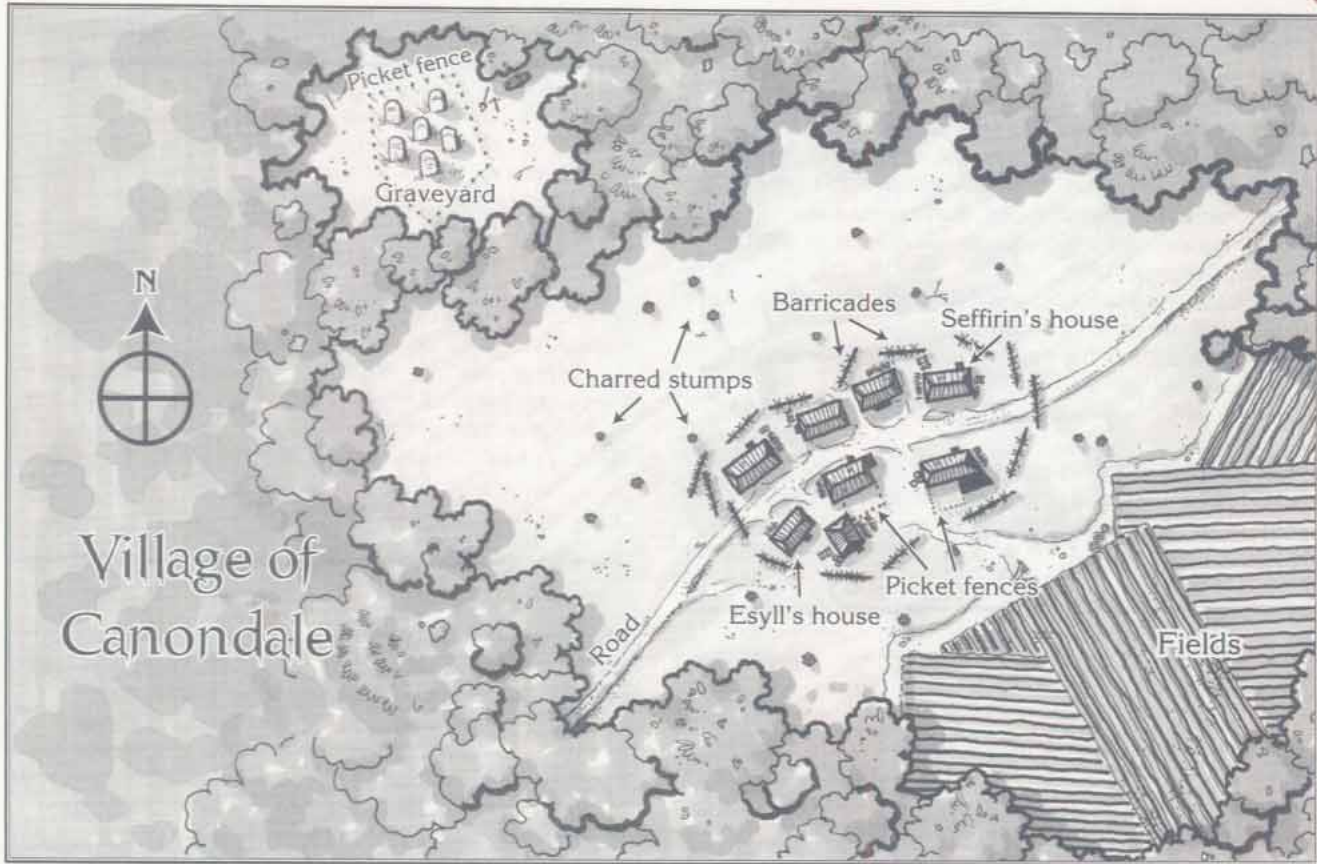
Background

A year ago, some Vistani bandits stole a set of five religious statuettes and a prayer scroll from a local lord; these items were once part of Azenwrath. After months of traveling, the caravan came upon Canondale, a quaint village nestled in the bosom of a giant forest. The Vistani traded the cursed items for supplies, then continued on their way, out of this story.

Although several good people of Canondale possessed the statuettes, it was Laurina Hezer, the mayor's wife, who bought the scroll. A work of intricate illustration and superb script, the prayer scroll swiftly became her prized possession—a fact her husband Seffirin did not fail to notice. Nightly, Laurina prayed from the scroll, and nightly she kissed the bottom of the page. Nightly, Seffirin dusted the scroll with a wisp of cyanide, and nightly he watched his wife slowly poison herself. Two months later, Laurina died from cyanide poisoning, all because evil Seffirin wanted to claim another woman, Esyll Cramore, as his future wife. The villagers of Canondale, a trusting folk, never suspected the mayor of the foul deed, so his actions went unpunished.

In a separate event, Azenwrath sensed the location of the statuettes and scroll, and made its way toward Canondale. Four days ago—three months after Laurina's death—the golem came within 50 miles of the village, an event heralded in Canondale by moving trees, whispering statuettes, and Laurina's prayer scroll announcing, "I'm near." Seffirin immediately thought his wife's spirit was haunting him. The villagers believed the nearby forest cursed, but felt the "holy" statuettes were warning them of the danger through their whispers. (Quite devout, they believe only in the goodness of these items and have come to treasure them.)

After several trees attacked local hunters, the villagers cut down the trees and burned the stumps (not knowing that they destroyed the only trees that



Azenwrath could control through the icons). Panicked, Canondale sent a rider to seek help from the local lord, but again, coincidence came to play a part in the rider's fate. Three evil treants within the forest sensed Azenwrath's influence over the area, and moved closer to the village to investigate. One managed to ambush the rider and wound his mount. The poor horse limped back to the village. The villagers, believing some evil isolated them from the outside world, barricaded Canondale from the haunted woods. This has been the situation for the last two days.

The Adventure Begins

This adventure takes place in spring, anywhere a small village rests within a large forest. Journeying in the wilds of Ravenloft, the heroes have spent the day trekking through forest and miserable conditions on their way elsewhere. Read or paraphrase the following:

A long day of travel in the damp country air has made your party cold and tired. The towering trees in the dark forest seem to stretch taller than many mountains, blocking the waning sun's feeble light. When it breaks through the mist, shadows stretch like torture racks across the path, where a thick carpet of moss

and damp leaves mutes your footfalls. This is not a place in which you'd like to spend the night.

Unexpectedly, your feet find solid purchase on a well-traveled cart path that appears between clumps of thick ground mist. It leads in the direction you're traveling. The forest quickly thins beside the path, and you arrive in a clearing of blackened stumps and small fields filled with untended weeds. Beyond that rests a village of seven homes surrounded by a hastily erected battlement of felled trees. Roughly two dozen haggard villagers guard the battlement, casting silent suspicious looks and pointing pitchforks your way. And while they are far from welcoming, they appear more afraid than aggressive. From their furtive glances into the woods, they fear the forest more than you. Whatever choice you make, it had better be soon, for night approaches like a quick tide, and this is the friendliest place you've encountered all day.

The villagers, numbering twenty-three, have grown tired and wary. While not overtly hostile, they're suspicious and apprehensive, since the heroes are the first strangers they have seen in a week. Even when addressed in a friendly way, they say very little, and leave the talking to Mayor Seffirin Hezer (0-level human male, 7 hp, NE).

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Seffirin remains behind the barricade, asking the heroes questions about their origins and their purpose here. Whatever answers they offer, in whatever intonation, Seffirin will try to turn them away. He recognizes potentially meddling adventurers when he sees them, and fears they may discover his secret crime. During the conversation, Seffirin asks the following questions, which give a big clue as to what's been happening of late.

- And how is it you've traveled through the gauntlet of trees and come out unscathed?
- How do we know the hauntings are not ill omens of your arrival?
- How do we know 'twas not you who slew our rider?

Once Seffirin turns the heroes away or they tire of the one-sided exchange, a young woman named Esvll Cramore steps up to the barricade. Read or paraphrase the following speech:

A woman steps to the barricade, her blue eyes damp and large. Her hair falls to her shoulders like black smoke and her smile dissolves your fatigue. "Good travelers, wait," she says pleadingly. "I beg you on behalf of us all." She glances at Seffirin and adds, "Fright has addled the minds of reasonable people, but we are in perilous straits. You look to be a capable lot, and we are in dire need of assistance. The forest turns against us and kills or hurts those who enter. Truly, we are at wit's end. We cannot pay, but we can reward your stay with a well-cooked meal and a roof to keep the forest chill at bay. Please, what say you? Will you help us?"

If the heroes agree to help, Mayor Seffirin leaves in a huff and retires to his home for the evening. He knows he cannot go against the villagers' wishes, and he does not want to attract undue attention to himself. The villagers, on the other hand, are grateful for the heroes' presence. Esvll Cramore and the other women hurry off to prepare a meal for their guests while the men escort the heroes and their mounts to Esvll's barn. During this time, the villagers are still quiet, and would prefer Esvll answer all questions. They respond to most queries with: "In due time, good sir," or "All stories are best told after a meal."

A Warm Meal

The heroes are guests at Esvll's home. She will sleep elsewhere during their stay; for it is not proper for a single woman in Canondale to entertain strangers alone. When the heroes enter her cottage, read or paraphrase the following:

Esvll's simple, one-room cottage marks her as a woman of little means but strong conviction. In the broad hearth, a low fire throws a warm orange glow across the room. A hanging kettle filled with minted broth and meat scent the air. Religious items adorn the rustic mantle above the fire, including an incense box, candles, and a small shrine. A narrow bed occupies a corner, and in the center of the room lies a rickety wood table and stools.

Esvll invites you to sit at the table and immediately serves up a round of her broth. Behind her, two neighbor women bring simple dishes of wild rice and lamb. Though half the men remain at the barricades, others join their wives and children at the open windows and door, quietly staring.

The incense box contains one of the statuettes carved from Azenwrath's body. Esvll will answer questions only after the meal in accordance with her side of the bargain—or she jokes, "Half payment now, and half payment after you hear our story." Once the heroes finish with the meal, Esvll can supply the following information:

- Four days ago, the forest became haunted or cursed. The wildlife went quiet and vanished, and the livestock panicked. Trees attacked a party of hunters in the wood. Although not seriously hurt, the hunters bore lash marks and bruises from flailing branches and grabbing roots.
- Three days ago, one of the trees bordering the village began moving as though uprooting itself. Panicked, the villagers cut down the tree and went on to destroy the other trees within immediate reach of Canondale. They burned the stumps to prevent them from growing back.
- Also three days ago, the villagers sent Serek, the community's best rider, to ask the local lord for help. Serek never made it. Minutes after he entered the forest, the villagers heard his bloodcurdling scream. A small party including Esvll braved the woods and found the rider's wounded horse running wild. They brought the poor animal back, but had to put it to sleep. Something large had bitten the beast's flanks, and there were sharp slivers of wood in the wounds. They never found Serek's body.

Esvll will try to answer any questions the heroes have, but she knows little else about each incident. She does not mention the whispering statuettes because she does not consider them a part of the problem (or perhaps she merely does not wish to admit it). Having finished her tale, Esvll bids the heroes goodnight and retires to a friend's home. The other villagers depart for their homes as well, but the heroes can talk to a group

of three men keeping sentry over the night, and learn the following through casual conversation:

- The forest is haunted. Mayor Seffirin says that the dead have come back to haunt the living, and manifest through the trees.
- The villagers believe in Mayor Seffirin, though he is quick to anger of late. But considering his wife's death three months ago and the recent hauntings, it's understandable.
- Esvyll is a lovely woman and would make "an excellent wife," but the village has no bachelors. A second guard is quick to add that Seffirin is available now, and he seems quite attracted to Esvyll, but she doesn't appear to return his interest.
- Laurina, Seffirin's wife, grew weaker over a period of several months, eventually falling into a sleep from which she never awoke.

If the heroes remain outside with the guards late into the evening, go to "Driven by Guilt." If anyone goes to sleep in Esvyll's home, see "Anything but Peaceful."

Anything but Peaceful

Assuming at least one hero beds down for the evening, read or paraphrase the following:



With a long day's travel behind you and a meal still warm in your belly, sleep overtakes you easily. The dying firewood cracks and pops quietly and the fresh straw on the floor is a welcome change from last night's blanket of wet leaves. Still, however, even this tranquility is short-lived. A few hours into your respite, long after the fire has died, someone begins to speak in a hushed voice just outside the window. Straining to understand the whispers, you awaken slowly as concentration focuses your thoughts. The voices are still too low to understand. You quietly near the window, hoping to grasp the words, but for naught; there is nobody outside the window. Further out, however, you see Seffirin sneaking past the barricade and into the dark of the forest. You then realize the whispers you hear are coming from within the room.



The wooden statuette in Esvyll's incense box on the hearth has begun to whisper in multiple voices. Azenwrath is nearing the village and will arrive by the next nightfall. If the heroes chose to follow Seffirin into the woods, see "Driven by Guilt" below. If they investigate the whispers, continue with this section.

The whispers are soft and ubiquitous, making it difficult to locate the source. If the players come close to the incense box, however, they have a one-in-six chance (1d6, except for thieves who may detect noise)

of hearing something moving inside; the statuette is trembling. The box is a simple wooden container with an unattached lid. If the heroes lift the lid, the statuette stops trembling and the whispers cease. The statuette, is a simple carving of a regional deity. There is nothing remarkable about it, but *detect magic* will reveal minor enchantments predominantly from the schools of alteration and summoning.

During this time, the villagers awaken; they too have heard the whispers of their statuettes and believe it heralds an imminent event. Within a few moments, they are all mulling around outside, talking quietly, waiting apprehensively and stealing concerned glances at the dark forest. Esvyll is outside as well. If asked what is happening, she will tell the heroes about the statues and the omens associated with them. She relates the following information.

- A band of Vistani came to Canondale a year ago and traded the holy icons for food. They left immediately without a hint of trouble or thievery.
- The items traded included five statuettes and one scroll. Esvyll and her neighbors bought the statuettes, but Seffirin's wife traded for the beautiful scroll.
- A week ago, the statuettes began whispering, heralding the troubles that were soon to follow. Esvyll and the villagers believe the icons are warning them of the evil in the forest.
- Seffirin claimed that his wife's scroll never reacted in any way, but he was unwilling to let others see it. As a matter of fact, ever since the events began, Seffirin has not allowed anyone into his home.

The villagers will present the statuettes if asked, but they will not allow the heroes to destroy or take the items. Without a village priest, the icons are their sole source of religious fulfillment and faith. The people of Canondale will resort to force in order to protect their worship. By this time, if the heroes have not done so, one of the villagers will go to the mayor's home to check up on him. Seffirin is missing, however, as is his wife's scroll (as detailed in the "Driven by Guilt" section). A cursory examination of his house, however, may turn up a clay jar sealed with wax hidden behind a false stone in the fireplace (one-in-six chance on a 1d6 of finding it). The jar contains cyanide.

Driven by Guilt

Ever since the heroes' arrival, Seffirin has been troubled, fearing they may uncover his crime. He has spent the evening pacing, trying to decide his next move. Desperate, he has decided to take the scroll, exhume Laurina's body, and bury both at a nearby crossroad. According to local superstition, burying a body at a crossroad confounds its ghost and forces it to remain beneath the ground. Sometime in the dead of night, Seffirin sneaks past the barricade and makes his way into the dark woods.

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The heroes have two opportunities to spot Seffirin leaving the village. First, they may see him leave while they're keeping the guards company during the night watch. Although the three villagers don't notice Seffirin slipping past the barricade (their attention is on the forest), the heroes have a two-in-six chance to do so (success comes with a result of 5 or 6 on a 1d6, but thieves also can use their ability to detect noise). Second, the heroes who sleep at Esyll's (see "Anything but Peaceful") spot Seffirin while investigating the whispering noises.

If the heroes check out Seffirin's home, they may also discover his actions, since he leaves tracks in the damp, muddy ground. The heroes can follow the footprints by using the tracking proficiency with a -2 modifier (a -6 penalty for poor lighting counteracts the +4 bonus for muddy ground). If the heroes do not possess this skill, then one of the village hunters can track for them. Regardless, the villagers, if informed, will remark that Seffirin is heading toward the graveyard.

If the heroes leave the barricade and head into the woods, describe the dark, dense cover and strange crackling sounds the branches make in the wind. Then announce that they hear a scream—a man's scream. (It's coming from the graveyard.) If the heroes rush toward the cry, read or paraphrase the following:

Within a heart-pounding moment, you break into a small clearing that holds the village graveyard.

Tombstones lie toppled and broken, and skeletons and rotting corpses have been tossed about like trash. Dark pits dot the ground at the site of the opened graves.

Using its stout and fluid roots, an immense tree-creature continues to unearth dead bodies. Four of them dangle from its branches. Between you and this grave-robber looms a second, larger tree. Seffirin hangs in its grasp, screaming hysterically. You hear the crackling of wood as the massive tree opens two yellow eyes and a wide mouth filled with splinters and sharpened bark.

"Well, well," rumbles the creature to its companion, in a voice so grating that it hurts to listen. "Cease your play with the corpses. Fresher meals await."

Treants, Evil (2): AC 0; MV 12; HD 7; hp 28, 37; THACO 13; #AT 2 (branches); Dmg 2d8/2d8; SW fire (+4 to fire attacks against treant, +1 damage per die, treant gets -4 to saves against fire-based spells); SZ H (13'); ML elite (13); Int very (11); AL CE; XP 9,000 each.

Elder Treant, Evil: AC 0; MV 12; HD 10; hp 63; THACO 11; #AT 2 (branches); Dmg 3d6/3d6; SW fire (same as above); SZ H (15' tall); ML elite (14); Int very (12); AL CE; XP 12,000.

The 10 Hit Die treant (the eldest) is the one who speaks. Although the heroes only see one other treant at first, a third one (the youngest) stands motionless at

the edge of the clearing. There is a 90% chance the heroes will mistake it for a normal tree and go about fighting the other two. The third treant attacks when it believes it can gain the upper hand in the melee.

Note that the presence of Seffirin's scroll—a part of Azenwrath—gives the golem control over trees in the area. This trio of treants cannot exert their usual control over the immediate forest, a fact they do not realize before combat begins. When battling the heroes, one treant will try to animate a nearby tree, only to discover it cannot. Play out this surprising development with the stunned treant losing its attacks for that round.

The treants sense Azenwrath's presence, and even know some information about the golem. They have been hanging about, feeding on the wildlife, waiting for the former treant's arrival. For them, meeting Azenwrath is like witnessing history or seeing a legend. After all, Azenwrath is the oldest of "their kind" in these parts.

When the heroes defeat the elder treant's companions, or when it is near death itself, the largest creature will attempt to bargain for its life. If the heroes kill the treant at this point, it dies with the word "grandfather" on its bark-covered tongue. Otherwise it waits for an answer. If the heroes agree to its terms, continue reading.

I am not the monster you seek, though in truth the evil that holds this village is . . . was one of my ilk. Once a treant, he came from a place of sun and warmth. But that was almost before time itself, for he is possibly the first on this accursed soil. Here, he atrophied in trunk and spirit. The tales I have heard, whispered from leaf to leaf, say he fell to a powerful wizard who dissected and dismembered him into so many trinkets and artifacts.

But the treant named Azenwrath was a force of nature, a casing of bark imprisoning a storm of violence. And that does not die so easily. Whether by the force of his spiteful existence or through the spells inscribed on his form, Azenwrath returned, no longer dead, yet not truly living. In truth, I think few, including Azenwrath himself, truly know what he has become. He wanders the lands, seeking out the scattered portions of himself, whether they now take the form of wands, or jewelry, or . . . scrolls. He comes for his stolen body parts, and when he is near, he speaks through them with written words or whispers. He—nay, it—is a single-minded juggernaut, a storm whose course you cannot alter, but can only endure."

If you feel that the heroes need more information to help them survive the upcoming encounter with Azenwrath, then the treant can relate the following information as part of the legends. It's best that the players work for these tidbits through clever roleplaying, however.

- If there is anything of treant left within Azenwrath, then fire will be its weakness.
- Azenwrath can cast the spells from the scrolls covering its body.
- Legends say that when confronted with a light like the sun of its homeland, Azenwrath may remember and lower its guard.

Once the treant recounts its tale, it departs.

Seffirin is in shock and will not recover for a while; he simply rocks back and forth mumbling, "It wasn't her . . . I am free." If the heroes realize that Seffirin killed his wife and confront him with the truth, he continues rocking, whispering, "It's true, all true. I killed her. But it wasn't her ghost. I am free! . . ."

The scroll, while still intact, has "Death to you" written across its face in dark, oily letters. The scroll possesses the same enchantments as the statuettes. Anyone with special knowledge of herbalism or survival can ascertain that the light almond scent on the scroll is the remnant of cyanide.

End Game

Upon returning to Canondale, the heroes must decide on their next course of action. The villagers will abandon neither their village nor their religious icons. Although they understand the items belong to this Azenwrath creature, it is not the statuettes themselves, but what they represent, that is significant. The icons are symbolic of Canondale's faith; sacrificing them is the same as abandoning their beliefs.

If the heroes force the villagers into surrendering the icons, then they must make a 5% powers check for destroying another's faith (the road to hell is paved with good intentions). Leaving the villagers to face Azenwrath alone, however, will incur a 20% powers check for abandoning a promise to help and for allowing innocents to die. If they agree to help, then the heroes and villagers have one day to prepare for Azenwrath's appearance. During this time, the statuettes shake and whisper with increasing strength, and the scroll script becomes an excited scribble.

Azenwrath will reach Canondale late in the night and go directly for its pieces. If hindered, it will dispose of each opponent in turn before proceeding with its primary objective. If the heroes destroyed the items beforehand, it will rampage through the community until everyone is dead. Unfortunately, the villagers are no match for this creature. It is better the heroes confront Azenwrath, lest they want the deaths of innocents on their conscience. If no one stood in its way, the spell-rune golem would simply take what belongs to it and leave Canondale. Defeating this creature is as simple as placing the statuettes and scroll out in the open for the golem to take and leave. The frustrating part is that the villagers are not willing to do so.

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*Some dark Presence watching by my bed,
The awful image of a nameless dread.*

—James Thomson
"Insomnia"

BIOGRAPHY



In the outskirts of a small farming village, a young woman pieced together a pet to stave off loneliness. Now, instead of welcoming its watchful attentions, she finds herself dreading its very presence.

Appearance

When a traveler comes across the Chaperone on a lonely road, he may at first think a great hound has stepped into view. The creature does have the height and breadth of a dog, yet it moves like a cat, and its features are feline. Its once-pointed ears now droop, adding to the confusion.

A dark patchwork of motley fur and leather covers the Chaperone's frame. Should it pause to yawn and casually lick a paw, its claws and teeth glint like polished silver in the light. A second glance reveals them to be a collection of needles and small knives. Its eyes are sunken, with a dull glint that brightens to an eerie glow when it feels the urge to attack.

The Chaperone

Patchwork Golem, Neutral Evil

Armor Class	5	Str	18
Movement	12	Dex	19
Level/Hit Dice	9	Con	20
Hit Points	56	Int	10
THACO	11	Wis	2
Morale	20	Cha	8
No. of Attacks	3	XP	2,000
Damage/Attack	1d3/1d3/1d8		
Special Attacks	Rear claws (1d4 each); call wild cats and dogs; leap; 90% chance to surprise		
Special Defenses	Immune to fire; +1 or better magical weapons to hit		
Special Vulnerabilities	Water; its name (Amber)		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

Construction

The Chaperone's creator stitched its hide from pieces of leather and fur, then stuffed it with cotton. Pins, needles, and small knives (usually paring knives) form its claws and teeth. Its eyes are two amber buttons that appear

dull until battle; in combat they glow like coals. Although its ears have the same shape as a housecat's, the leather that they consist of has softened, and they now droop forward.

Zeitgeber: The Chaperone's mistress named it Amber, after its button eyes. If someone calls that name in a friendly tone, as if summoning a beloved pet, the creature immediately comes, assuming it's within earshot. It hangs about the caller's legs, patiently waiting 3 rounds to be petted. If it doesn't get the attention it wants, it starts nipping at the caller's heels and calves. The caller still has a chance to prevent an out-and-out attack if he or she strokes its head or tickles its chin once it begins its playful nipping. Either way, however, the Chaperone's docile nature may quickly fade. Even after it receives attention, it reverts to its potentially deadly personality.

Background

Bethany Jamieson is a thirteen-year-old recluse who lives in a humble farming cottage at the edge of a wood, not far from a small village. She's a strange and quiet girl, but hers has not been an easy life. Her mother, Sarah, died two years ago in a fall. After that, Bethany's father became increasingly strict, making Bethany a virtual prisoner at their remote cottage. He said Bethany's dark beauty would attract "the demons," and as a "female," Bethany could not be trusted to resist. He also claimed the village boys could only have "lustful and impure thoughts" toward his daughter, so he never allowed her to leave their property.

In truth, most of the villagers were content to stay clear of both Bethany and Roland Jamieson. Roland's harsh temperament was difficult to take, and a few of the villagers believed Bethany's mother had been a witch. When an unusually vicious pack of wolves killed Bethany's father late last winter, only a kind woman named Maude Bothel offered to take the girl in. Bethany insisted that she could "do for" herself, however. She continued to live alone, with only a cantankerous old barn cat and a cow for company.

Once in a while, Maude paid Bethany a visit to see how she was faring. Fearful of the wolves, the woman brought along her eighteen-year-old son, Arthur. The young man was easily taken with Bethany's beauty (and it didn't hurt that she had a nice little cottage of her own). Arthur set out to woo her, and eventually, Bethany rewarded him with a smile. Maude set out to woo her husband to the idea of a match. Even if

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Bethany herself was not yet certain, both mother and son believed a marriage would eventually take place. Neither had any idea what kind of companionship Bethany really had in mind at that time.

During the final cold snap before the spring, the old barn cat died. Though Bethany would admit it to no one, she was painfully lonely, and she set about correcting it. She wanted a secret companion that would sit beside her bed and guard her faithfully. That night she sat beside the fire, trimming and stitching together little scraps of hide from her father's old fur traps. Then she skinned the dead cat and claimed its fur as well.

Maude and Arthur stopped by the next day, and they were pleased when Bethany asked if they'd take her into the village. Bethany purchased some cotton batting and a collection of needles—"for quilting," the girl said. Maude smiled knowingly, thinking Bethany intended to start her bridal hope chest. Of course Bethany needed the materials for her creation: a crudely rendered cat the size of a hound. To the cotton stuffing she added a blue scarf that had belonged to her mother. She snipped two amber buttons from one of her father's vests, and used them for eyes. Small knives and needles became its claws and teeth.

At first the thing was lifeless. And while Bethany had not really expected it to live, she became convinced it could. She had stitched for three days, hardly eating or sleeping, and stared at her work for three nights more. Now she knew what it lacked. Outside, the wind tossed the limbs of the trees in a restless fury, but within Bethany, there came a strange calm. She stepped out into the tempest and went to a small grave by the barn, then dug up the dead cat's remains and cut out its heart. Back in the cottage, she made a small incision in the golem's chest and pushed the heart deep inside. Then she stitched up the wound, carefully kissed the needle-toothed mouth, and sat back to watch. A tiny droplet of blood formed on her pin-pricked lip, but she was too enrapt to care.

The firelight flickered, casting weird shadows about the cottage. The fur and leather form shivered before her. Instinctively, Bethany stroked at its body, and it rumbled unevenly. A sullen glow lit its eyes. Bethany stood, and the strange creation rose too, then rubbed its head against her thigh. Unbidden, a name came to Bethany's lips. "Amber," she pronounced. "Just like the buttons." Amber looked up at her and made a strange yelping mewl in agreement.

Personality

Upon its creation, the Chaperone felt the need to protect Bethany. And it did just that—slinking out at night to take down the wolves she feared. Now that a few weeks have passed, the Chaperone has lost all trace of innocence. It no longer feels dependent on Bethany, and has come to understand its nature and despise her for it. Yet for the moment, it wants to keep

her alive and all to itself. It still craves affection and attention, and knows there is no one but Bethany to supply it. Through its zeitgeber, the Chaperone is bound to her (see "Construction").

Combat

Like its cousin the straw golem, the Chaperone has an immunity to fire and requires +1 or better weapons to hit. Magical edged weapons cause double damage. If drenched in water (the equivalent of one bucket), its movements slow (as per the spell) for 3 rounds.

The Chaperone prefers to silently stalk a foe and pounce from a hiding place. Since it moves as silently and gracefully as a cat, it has a 90% chance to surprise its foes when moving through shadows, tall grass, or similar cover. Although it does not have much experience with heroes, its instinct tells it to attack those who appear the weakest first. However, if a strong hero gets caught in a compromising situation, the Chaperone will not hesitate to strike.

Like big cats, the golem can deliver a savage three-part attack: one slash with each front paw, plus a bite. If it successfully tears into an opponent with both front paws, it can also make a raking attack with its hind legs. Those same legs allow it to pounce on a foe from as far as 10 feet away. If it feels the need, the Chaperone can also jump 10 feet straight up into the air.



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Fairly early in its existence, this creature discovered an unusual ability. It can call on stray dogs and feral cats to attack its foes, summoning 2d4 allies. Should it ever face more than one opponent, it will not hesitate to summon help.

Wild cats (2d4): AC 5; MV 18; THACO 19; #AT 3; Dmg 1-2/1-2/1-2; SA rear claw rake 1-2/1-2, foes suffer a -3 penalty on surprise rolls; SD surprised on only a 1 or 2, leaping, climbing; MR nil; SZ T; ML average (10); AL N; XP 35.

Wild dogs (2d4): AC 7; MV 15; THACO 19; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4; MR nil; SZ S; ML unsteady (7); AL N; XP 35.

CAT-AND-MOUSE GAMES



You can place this adventure in any small, isolated farming village. The heroes arrive just as a group of villagers is gathering to search for Arthur Bothel, who is missing. If the heroes aid in the search, they will soon discover that they are the next prey in a cat-and-mouse game.

This adventure is for four to six characters of levels 5 to 7 (about 30 levels total). Heroes should have +1 or better magical weapons to fend off the golem.

Adventure Setup

Several months after Bethany created the Chaperone, it started becoming restless. Though Bethany was initially pleased, her affection quickly faded. The increasingly frequent visits that she made to the village bothered the Chaperone for two reasons: It didn't like the idea that Bethany could be putting herself in danger, and it wasn't getting the attention it wanted. The golem had already defeated the dangerous wolves, so it no longer had any interesting things to play with nearby. For these reasons, it decided to follow Bethany to the village one day instead of snoozing until nightfall.

The Chaperone did not actually enter the village; it preferred to remain under cover. Nonetheless, it learned a great deal. The golem saw people moving around. Through its nighttime forays, it knew of the existence of other creatures with shapes resembling it, but now for the first time, it saw a child cuddling a kitten and a young man playing with a jubilant dog. The golem grew jealous of these events; Bethany had scarcely played with it since the first week of its existence.

That day Arthur Bothel walked Bethany home. He and Bethany had met several times of late, and while she remained somewhat quiet, she was steadily warming to his company. This time, she laughed at his banter. Encouraged, Arthur took her hand for a moment. Bethany did not object, but the Chaperone

surely did. Seeing Arthur as a threat, it followed him back to his house. After sunset, Arthur headed out to the barn. The Chaperone chased him into the fields, "played" with him a little, and brought the resulting corpse home to show its mistress.

At some level, the golem thought Bethany would be pleased. When she cowered and whimpered in a corner, it felt betrayed. In an effort to get some comfort and make "it all better," the Chaperone started rubbing its head against Bethany, painting her red with Arthur's blood. Bethany shrank further into the corner, and the Chaperone started nipping to gain her attention. Finally, the girl patted it a few times, still whimpering.

After that night, the Chaperone wouldn't allow Bethany to leave the area around the cottage, using a few harsh lessons and its mental telepathy to keep her in check. Bethany buried Arthur's remains in the garden. When the adventure begins, two days have passed since his death.

The Adventure Begins

The heroes enter the village and find that a crowd has gathered upon the road. Above, storm clouds are threatening rain. Read or paraphrase the following:

Though the sun rose in a clear sky, throughout the morning's travel, the sky has steadily darkened, and the air carries the promise of a storm. As thunder rumbles in the distance, the road takes a turn, and you enter a small village.

Just past three squat buildings, a group of villagers has gathered on the road. Their dress suggests they are simple farmers and their families. They're speaking to one another in excited tones, with a note of underlying fear. Noticing your approach, a woman pushes through the crowd and stops before you. Her face is contorted with anguish, her eyes red from crying.

"Have you seen a young man about eighteen years old, with red hair and freckles?" the woman asks desperately. "He is my son, and he has been missing for two days now."

The heroes may interact with Maude Bothel as they wish. If they ask some clarifying questions, they can find out the following:

- Maude's son, Arthur, was last seen heading out to clean the stables of the Bothel farm. That was in the evening, two days ago.
- Her husband, Edward Bothel, discovered the tracks of a large animal chasing someone yesterday afternoon. The tracks lead away from the farm and onto the rocky prominence next to a broad stream before vanishing.

- Something has been killing wolves in the area of late, and the farmers think that the same creature made the prints that follow Arthur's.
- A group of farmers is about to spread out from the stream and start their search this morning until an hour before twilight.

Maude begs the heroes to help them search for her son. In her duress, she has completely forgotten Bethany and won't mention her; the heroes won't learn about Arthur's link to the girl until later. In the meantime, Maude offers to let the heroes stay in her farmhouse until they leave the area.

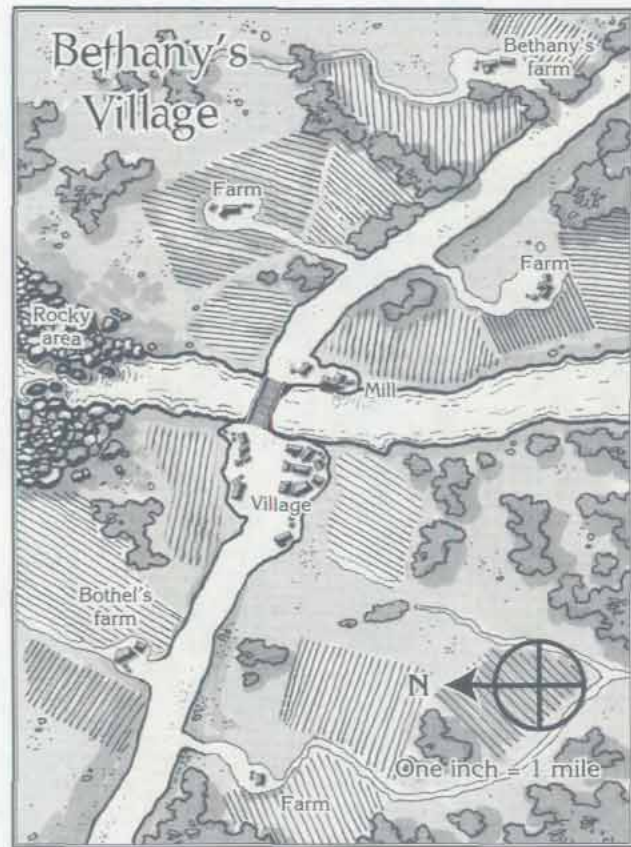
The Cat's Away . . .

If the heroes decide to help search for Arthur, they can leave with the farmers to pick up the trail of the animal. It takes less than thirty minutes to reach the part of the stream that is cutting through bare rock. Before they get there, Edward Bothel pulls the heroes aside and points out the strange prints that they found. Heroes with the animal lore proficiency can take a closer look. With a successful proficiency check, they determine they've never seen prints quite like these before. The size and spacing of the prints indicate that the creature is as large as a lion. But there are no telltale pad marks to identify the animal, and the claws or nails that have marked the mud must have been sharp and straight, yet very uneven.

At the stream, Edward Bothel directs the heroes and farmers to spread out on each bank. He assigns himself and the heroes to the other side of the stream. The water is several feet deep and 7 feet wide. The Chaperone can easily jump it (and did), but the heroes might be less successful. Even if they fail, wet clothing is probably all they'll suffer.

At this point, the heroes can ask Edward a few more questions if they wish. Some information that Arthur's father gives out includes the following:

- Arthur is sweet on a girl who lives in the country. Edward didn't think much of the girl at first, but nonetheless, he's not looking forward to telling her that Arthur is missing. He hopes they can find their son first.
- If asked whether Arthur might have gone to his sweetheart, Edward says no—especially not if he's injured or being chased. The girl's house lies to the east and is pretty remote, so it'd be closer just to head back into the village from the stream. Plus, after two days, Arthur or the girl would've come into the village to say that Arthur is all right. Maude doesn't want to admit it, but Edward knows there's a good chance his son is dead.
- Edward is worried about a killer that's in the area—some animal that has taken down a whole pack of wolves over the last few months. Edward found one of the wolf carcasses on his own land. Oddly, it had a



needle stuck in its throat. He doesn't think a wild animal would have attacked Arthur so close to the house, but he's still worried.

- Edward's neighbor found an odd array of dead animals on his land: a wolf, several cats, and two dogs, all bloodied. "They must have had quite a battle," says Edward. "It's not clear what happened, but with so many small carcasses around the wolf, it looked like the dogs and cats had fought as a group." The two dogs fighting a wolf could be explained—but three cats, too? They're usually more solitary. Still, it seems the cats and dogs did fight as one.

If the heroes ask Edward about his son's sweetheart, they can learn her name and can get directions to her cottage; it's about an hour's walk from the Bothel house on the other side of the village. Edward brushes aside any further questions and asks them to start looking for tracks—he didn't come out here for a chat.

The heroes must walk about ten minutes before the rocky area ends. Have those heroes with the tracking proficiency make a check. If someone succeeds, he or she can lead the party for about two hundred yards, during which the tracks suggest that both the creature and the young man were running, with occasional stops to change direction. Over time, the tracker discerns that the creature lopes like a large cat. Read the following text as the heroes make their way over the field:



The unusual tracks follow the side of an irrigation ditch, where the bright green beginnings of this year's spring grass have already begun to push up through the mud. The footprints of Arthur Bothel and the strange creature have crushed some of the sprouts, but the life force in the small plants is strong enough that they have already begun to right themselves.

This isn't the case in front of you, however. From the looks of the tracks, the creature jumped at the boy and brought him down. The ensuing struggle destroyed the new grass, leaving nothing but a churned spot in the mud. From there, it appears the creature was dragging a dead weight—probably Arthur.

During the chase from the stream to this point, the Chaperone was toying with Arthur, often drawing even with him and nicking him with his claws and then dropping back. When the golem tired of the game, it killed its prey and then picked up his corpse. The tracker can confirm that the creature is no longer running.

If the heroes continue to follow the tracks, go to "... But the Mice Cannot Play!" If they wish to return to the village, go to "Back in the Village."

... But the Mice Cannot Play!

Once the heroes approach Bethany's lands, the Chaperone starts toying with them. The dark spirit that animates this golem is quite clever, and boasts instincts from beyond the grave. Having realized the danger of leading enemies to its lair, it has spent the last two days destroying or concealing all tracks leading to the cottage. In addition, it has planted some false ones to draw attention away from the cottage. Its tactics are outlined below.

The Cemetery Trap: False tracks lead to the village's cemetery and beyond. The Chaperone dug up a fairly recent grave, hid the body, and destroyed the coffin's lid, making it look like the corpse split it from the inside and dug upwards. Then it dug up a second grave and mangled the corpse within. (You may want to call for a horror check.) A successful tracking proficiency check made at a -5 penalty allows a hero to discover faint tracks leading to a shallow grave nearby that contains the "ghoul." A successful Intelligence check made at half the score allows a hero to spot a pin in the newly turned earth or realize that nothing of the victim's corpse was actually eaten.

Following the false tracks beyond the cemetery leads the heroes into a pit trap created by the Chaperone. Use the normal rules for trap detection if the heroes are wise enough to remember to look. Since the golem doesn't have much in the way of fine manipulation skills, the pit is more of an inconvenience than anything.

Cats and Dogs: When the timing is right, the Chaperone summons cats and dogs to attack the heroes. The golem itself doesn't join the fight; it remains behind cover. (You may want to call for a fear check.) By the time the heroes finish dealing with the attackers, the golem will have left the area. If a hero thinks to watch his or her surroundings, a successful Intelligence check with a +4 bonus allows the hero to glimpse the fleeing Chaperone. But it's only a glimpse—just a flash that reveals the golem's size, loping grace, and silent movement.

Home to Mother: After the Chaperone has finished toying with the heroes, it is time to lead them to Bethany's cottage. This can happen in one of several ways: The Chaperone can lead them there personally, or leave fresh tracks heading in that direction. Else the heroes might simply see smoke coming from Bethany's chimney. Continue with "The Game Ends."

Back in the Village

The tracks of the creature lead through several acres of land. If the heroes wish to turn back at any point, remind them (preferably through a villager) that if they don't follow up on their current lead, the impending rain could wash out the tracks. As it is, the thunder gets closer, and sporadic drops of rain plop on their heads.

Should the heroes insist on going back after deducing the fate of Arthur, Maude rushes out of the small tavern and asks them if they found anything. (If it's late, the other farmers returned an hour ago with nothing.) If the heroes tell her that they suspect Arthur is dead, she sobs and runs back into the tavern to find her husband Edward. Then, together they ask the heroes for their help in finding the remains of Arthur's body.

The couple isn't entirely convinced that Arthur is dead, since they don't have proof. If he is, they want to bury him properly. They have heard horrible stories about the dead coming back to life if they don't have a proper burial. (Use stories that the heroes have learned in past adventures to urge them to help in this matter.) If the heroes go back to the spot where they left off, continue with "... But the Mice Cannot Play!"

If all else fails, the heroes can meet the golem as they pass the Jamieson farm. (A fresh set of tracks or the smoking chimney or even a scream might eventually lead them there. Or Maude might prompt a visit by expressing concern for poor Bethany, whom she's rather fond of.)

Remember that the heroes should have the illusion of free choice throughout this adventure, so don't force their hands. Instead, you can make minor adjustments to the plot as it unfolds to let the heroes experience true horror without being coerced into it.

The Game Ends

By this time, the Chaperone is ready to kill the heroes. If it is dark, the golem starts to worry at the group under night's cover. By day, it lures them to Bethany's lands

to make the kill. The area immediately surrounding the cottage is spotted with trees. The nearby fields farmed by Bethany and her father are a small patchwork rimmed with scrub and brush. Some of the fields have gone to tall weeds and hay. This type of convenient cover allows the Chaperone to play with the heroes and then dart back into concealment.

At some point during its "nip and run" assaults on the heroes, the Chaperone decides that it's time to kill Bethany and move on to other games. The golem streaks back to the cottage and enters. Read the following aloud when they enter the cottage:



The strange catlike creature has cornered a young, dark-haired girl. Although she keeps her head down and tries to fend off the blows with her scratched hands, you see that it will soon end for her. She looks up at her attacker briefly, allowing you to get a glimpse of her eyes. Although you can't be sure, it seems as if madness has overtaken her senses. "No, Amber," she whimpers before ducking her head back down.

The creature turns to look back at you briefly, its amber eyes glowing brightly. Then it purposefully turns around and strikes once more.



If the heroes kill the golem in the next two rounds, they can save Bethany. On the third round, Bethany dies, and the Chaperone jumps out the nearest window (it has no glass) and flees.

If the heroes kill the golem, its amber eyes cease glowing and its body sags. If the heroes save Bethany, they have two rounds to heal her before her wounds prove fatal.

Once the adventurers take care of the Chaperone and Bethany, they can look around the cottage. From the scraps and needles in Bethany's sewing kit, they should be able to surmise she created the Chaperone (if they haven't guessed already). If they check outside, they can find the rest of Arthur's body buried in the herb garden.

Recurrence

If the Chaperone escapes the heroes, it may follow them for several adventures, killing people and animals around them. Usually, it attacks lone characters who have some association with the heroes, but it sometimes takes on two, with the help of nearby cats and dogs. Once the heroes realize that the Chaperone is following them, it ducks into hiding for several days.

If Bethany survived the ordeal, the trauma of her situation leaves her even quieter and stranger than she once was. All she can say is that she didn't mean for anything bad to happen. Once she tells the heroes this, she won't speak again.

ALEXANDRE DU CIRE

The sense of inferiority inherent in the act of imitation breeds resentment. The impulse of the imitators is to overcome the model they imitate.

—Eric Hoffer

The Ordeal of Change (1964)

BIOGRAPHY



sculptor, Alexandre du Cire (do SEER) created the famed House of Wax in Port-a-Lucine. His figures are truly lifelike—too lifelike, in fact. Today the real du Cire rots in a cage in the attic of his museum, while a blood-and-wax imposter continues to work in his stead. In time, the creature hopes to replace every citizen of Port-a-Lucine with a wax golem just like himself.

Appearance

Du Cire is so exceedingly gaunt that most people believe he stands taller than his actual height of 5 feet 6 inches. He slicks back his short hair to exaggerate his pronounced widow's peak. His features are narrow and

angular, an effect he enhances with a thin, waxed mustache. All in all, du Cire does everything he can to look sinister, because it is very good for business. His pasty appearance and somewhat stiff demeanor do not reveal his true nature as a creature of wax. Provided he stays clear of flame (see "Combat"), du Cire appears to be thoroughly human.

The curator of the House of Wax wears crisply cut suits, usually black, and is never seen without a white carnation in his lapel. When stepping out, he dons a short black cape that falls to his waist. He favors a top hat and carries an ebony walking stick, which is capped by a heavy sphere of polished ivory.

Alexandre du Cire

Wax Golem, Neutral Evil

Armor Class	4	Str	18/76
Movement	12	Dex	15
Level/Hit Dice	8	Con	18
Hit Points	40	Int	15
THACO	13	Wis	10
Morale	19	Cha	14
No. Attacks	2 or 1	XP	2,000
Damage/Attack	2d6/2d6 (fists) or 1d4+4 (walking stick)		

Special Attacks +4 damage due to Strength; snaplock belt pistol*

Special Defenses Immune to cold- or electrical-based attacks, poison, and disease; +4 bonus against physical damage and mind-affecting spells and powers

Special Vulnerabilities Heat

Magic Resistance Nil

*Note: The snaplock belt pistol can be fired only once every two rounds. It has a speed factor of 10, unless it is already in firing position, which drops the factor to 1.

Background

Alexandre du Cire—the real du Cire—has been an artist almost from the day he was born. In school, his papers were constantly covered with sketches and doodles. As he grew older, he began to work with clay and stone, moving from illustration to sculpture. In time, he found his calling and began to create figures in wax. No other medium was able to capture the subtle elegance of life.



Alexandre du Cire

ALEXANDRE DU CIRE

And yet, for all its elegance, it was still not a perfect medium. With every month, du Cire worked harder to achieve his dream, but every effort seemed a failure. Always he saw flaws, imperfections that left him feeling distraught and morose.

Others did not share du Cire's critical view. They lauded his work and spread word of his skill throughout Dementlieu. Before long, du Cire's House of Wax had become one of the most popular museums in Port-a-Lucine. Alexandre du Cire grew wealthier with each passing day. His fame brought visitors from Dementlieu and beyond. He had everything that he had ever hoped for. And yet he was not happy. His work still lacked the perfection that he demanded.

It's not clear exactly how his obsession led to his downfall. True, one night in his studio he raised his head toward the sky, calling upon nameless forces, calling upon an artist's muse, pleading to any spirit who might heed his summons and grant him a wish—but these were a drunken man's words. He vowed that his life was meaningless unless he could see his wax attain the perfection of life. He worked feverishly for hours, and then his hand slipped, and a sharp edge tore into his flesh. Blood poured into the liquid wax in his basin. Du Cire laughed grimly and kept on working. To his wonder, the tainted wax proved to be the best material he had ever used.

Days later, du Cire had completed a self-portrait in wax, perfect in every way. No one could have said whether du Cire or his creation was the original if they stood side by side. With the figure finished, du Cire stepped back to admire his work. The pride in his face turned to horror as the wax mannequin opened its eyes and spread its lips in a fiendish grin, then reached out to seize him. The sculptor struggled, but he was outmatched. A cold hand clamped firmly over du Cire's mouth, stifling his scream. He felt himself growing weaker, as if the very essence of his being were slowly draining away, and then he closed his eyes, giving in to darkness and oblivion. On some level, he knew the hand on his mouth was growing warmer . . . and that his wish had come true. He had created a figure so perfectly lifelike, not even he could tell it was wax.

Since that night some two months ago, no one has seen the real Alexandre du Cire. The wax museum has been in the hands of a monster, a thing of blood and living wax.

The golem called du Cire has a fiendish plan for the people of Port-a-Lucine. Like his creator, he intends to continue sculpting perfect replicas. But each will be faithful only to him. Slowly, those replicas will take the place of every living citizen. The master golem cannot murder citizens outright, however. To survive, he and his fellow golems must keep alive the bodies of those they duplicate. Today the original du Cire sits like a catatonic prisoner in the House of Wax, along with those who share his fate. The master golem keeps his prisoners fed and watered, but he cares little for their

comfort. And why should he? They appear to be mindless husks, twitching on the floor, perversely mimicking the movement of those who now live in their stead.

Personality

Although the real Alexandre du Cire was a driven and obsessed artist, his replacement is careful and methodical. He is evil from any outside viewpoint, but the wax du Cire is not especially cruel or malicious. He is simply inhuman. From his egocentric perspective, humans are inferior and their lives are less valid than his (they are to him what intelligent beasts are to some humans). The golem has no understanding of human virtues such as compassion or sympathy. He does, however, have some "human" qualities. He wishes to survive. He also wishes to "fit in"—to have others like himself around him. The fact that the golems he creates obey him unswervingly seems to him simply the "natural order" of things, and he has no reason to believe otherwise.

Combat

The golem du Cire is a pragmatist and a bit of a dandy. He fights only when no other option presents itself. He does not enjoy combat, but neither does he fear it. When he engages in battle, he does so with the same cold precision he brings to his work. Although he shows no mercy (and expects none himself), he tries to avoid killing his enemies. After all, a defeated, living prisoner is a prime candidate for replacement.

Du Cire carries a snaplock belt pistol, which is always loaded if he expects trouble. This weapon can be fired once every other round and inflicts 1d8 points of damage per hit. If you roll an 8 on the damage die, roll again and add the new result to the original 8. (Repeat as long as you keep rolling 8s.) Short range for the snaplock pistol is 15 yards, medium is 30 yards, and long is 45 yards. The pistol is considered a small piercing weapon with a speed factor of 10 (or 1 if the weapon is already loaded and ready to fire).

In close combat, he favors two weapons: his walking stick and his bare fists. He prefers the stick when subduing a potential prisoner, stepping out of the shadows and delivering a stunning blow to the back of the head. The walking stick gives him a +2 attack bonus, and each successful blow inflicts 1d4+4 points of damage. If du Cire meets the normal conditions for a thief's backstabbing attack, the victim of a successful attack must make a save vs. paralysis or be knocked unconscious. A -1 penalty is applied to this saving throw for every 2 points of damage the attack inflicts. Du Cire does not gain any bonus to damage or other benefits associated with a thief's backstabbing attack.

When he attacks with his fists, du Cire simply pummels his victims into submission. The power of his blows inflicts 2d6 points of damage.

Like all wax golems, du Cire is immune to damage

ALEXANDRE DU CIRE

from cold-based or electrical attacks. The fact that he is not really a living creature makes him immune to toxins, disease, and the like. He also enjoys a +4 bonus when making any manner of saving throw to resist some form of physical damage.

Unlike most golems, du Cire is vulnerable to mind-affecting spells and powers. He does, however, gain a +4 saving throw bonus against such abilities.

Fire and heat are this creature's enemies. When an attack of either type strikes, the golem's features soften and run, making it clear that he's no ordinary human. Assuming he's not dead, his appearance returns to normal a few minutes after the attack. Note that bright sunlight and a warm fireplace do not immediately affect the golem, yet he avoids them nonetheless.

Art Imitates Life

To produce a duplicate, du Cire must sculpt a wax figure of the subject, adding a touch of the victim's blood to the wax. Usually, he ambushes a victim and then drags his or her unconscious form back to the workshop in the attic of the museum. If it seems practical, he'll lure someone into the House of Wax and capture the person there.

It takes the master of wax twenty hours to finish a replica. With each passing hour, the subject loses 5% of his or her memory (and experience points). As the last memory fades, the victim becomes a mindless shell. The wax statue, however, is indistinguishable from a living creature, imbued with all the memories and skills of the original model. Only two things set the original and duplicate apart: the new golem is utterly loyal to du Cire, and it shares du Cire's physical prowess.

The wax creature and its model are spiritually linked. This manifests itself in a strange way: Every movement the replicant makes is mirrored by a twitch in the muscles of the original.

If a wax golem's model is allowed to die, the creature cries out in agony and melts away. In less than a minute, nothing remains but a heap of clothing and a pool of quickly evaporating wax. In ten minutes, even the wax is gone.

When a wax golem is destroyed, the memories and personality of its model are restored (as are the victim's lost experience points). This process is not without hazard, however, for the sudden flood of emotions, thoughts, and karmic energy can break even the strongest mind. A madness check is required.

WAXING HORRIFIC



his adventure invites the heroes to discover the true nature of the wax museum and thwart the golem du Cire's wicked plot. The format is fairly loose. Below you'll find some background notes,

followed by a series of interconnected scenes. To heighten the terror, you can tailor this adventure to your players, taking advantage of any past contacts they may have in Port-a-Lucine.

The challenge is designed for a small group of heroes of levels 5 to 7. If less experienced adventurers are at hand, adjust the number of golems they face at the climax.

Give 'em What They Want!

Thanks to Hollywood, most players have a few expectations about what their heroes would face in a horrific "house of wax." The more you can play up these ideas in the adventure, the better.

At least once, the heroes should *mistake a living person, preferably someone who looks especially menacing, as part of an exhibit*. If it can be arranged, this is an ideal way for the heroes to first encounter the golem du Cire.

For a good fright, players expect a "personal" touch—seeing people and things they know in wax. The museum includes a gallery of tableaux depicting common scenes from Ravenloft. Descriptions are purposely vague, encouraging you to invent scenes specially tailored to your heroes. *Some scenes should depict things the heroes have heard about but haven't experienced firsthand*. (For instance, they might see a display titled "The hags of Tepest toil over their cauldron" or "The lovely mummy Tiyet consumes a heart.") These won't be precisely correct, but all are horrific and lifelike—enough, perhaps, to prompt a fear check.

Other scenes should be more familiar to the heroes, featuring horrific creatures that they have encountered personally. Start subtly; present a scene that's pretty close to their own history. Then present something even closer. (For example, they may see a particular werewolf savaging a victim—maybe even a friend or someone they've met. A particular vampire may be biting a damsel or lord, and the blood from the wound appears warm and fresh.) One exhibit might depict the climactic scene from a past adventure, but in any case, the heroes should eventually see one or more of themselves in wax. Play up the disturbing nature of this discovery; if you work at it, a horror check could be in order.

A display that features a hero's rendering in wax can be an important tool if du Cire captures that same hero later. Should this happen, the master of wax will use the existing wax statue as a starting point and merely refine it to create a new golem. This cuts the work time in half (to ten hours) and doubles the rate at which the victim's personality is drained away (to 10% per hour). Once the golem takes the hero's place, the heroes may notice that one of the figures is missing from the tableau.

No wax museum adventure should take place without a heated confrontation in the curator's workshop. (The setup below culminates with such a scene.) *At some point during the encounter, one or more of the*

heroes should be placed in a position where he is serious danger of plunging into a vat of molten wax. If that can't be arranged, you can stage matters so that a vat threatens to topple over and engulf someone.

On that same note, the heroes should have at least one chance to target a wax golem with a heat- or fire-based attack (including du Cire's duplicate). This adventure isn't complete unless they see waxen "flesh" dripping from a creature's deformed face.

Finally, in this adventure the heroes should discover the living shell of Alexandre du Cire. Early on, they're likely to assume that du Cire's duplicate is real—that he's simply a flesh-and-blood madman intent on replacing Port-a-Lucine's citizens with waxwork golems. When the heroes learn that he too is a wax golem, it may surprise them. Even then, they probably won't realize the real du Cire is still alive—not until they make a shocking discovery in the attic of the House of Wax. Only at this point should the players understand the full enormity of their situation.

The Adventure Begins

Port-a-Lucine is the perfect starting point for this adventure. Perhaps the heroes have been here for some time, or maybe they have just arrived; either option is acceptable. Whichever setup you choose, they should have at least some familiarity with the city and its culture. See "Dementlieu" in *Domains of Dread* or in an earlier edition of the RAVENLOFT campaign setting.

Scene One: The Hook

"Waxing Horrific" begins with the heroes enjoying a delightful meal at a small cafe known as The Blooming Rose. The fare is simple and cheap, but quite good. As their meal comes to a close and brandy or coffee is brought to the table, a young boy approaches.

The lad wears shabby clothes, but an alert character would notice that he's too clean to be a street urchin. (He's attempting to disguise himself.) The boy identifies himself as Ambrose Descarte, son of Baron Descarte, a wealthy and influential merchant whose name is certainly known to the heroes.

Before he can state his business with the party, Ambrose is interrupted by the owner of the Blooming Rose, Jean Paul Lumare. Lumare apologizes for the intrusion of this youngster and attempts to drag the boy away. A word from the heroes will end the matter if they insist that the lad be allowed to remain, especially if some manner of gratuity is offered to Lumare.

If the heroes don't prevent Ambrose's ejection from the Blooming Rose, the boy will be waiting for them when they leave. If the heroes still try to avoid him, he'll make a pest of himself (showing up wherever they go) until the party agrees to listen to him.

When he finally gets a chance to speak to the heroes, Ambrose explains that something unusual has

happened to his father, Baron Descarte. He is not sure what, but something is clearly amiss. If pressed, the boy can only say, "He's acting strangely and ignoring me." Although Ambrose has tried to find out what's wrong, his efforts have come to naught. That's why he decided to sneak out of the house in search of help.

In order to establish the truth of the matter, he invites the party to a costume party at his home. "Come," he pleads, "and meet my father. You'll see that something is amiss." Even if the heroes are not willing to agree on the spot, the boy will hand them a small stack of ornate invitations (one for each member of the party). Explaining that he must get home before he's missed or recognized, the boy turns and darts away.

Note: These initial scenes are simply a means of introducing the heroes to the mystery—of giving some hint of the golem du Cire's activity. If the heroes already know a prominent character whose strange behavior would pique their interest, by all means adjust the opening scenes to suit your players. Du Cire has been replacing a number of prominent citizens. Likewise, if you feel they would not respond to a strange boy's request, replace Ambrose with a more effective character (a damsel, perhaps) or beef up the boy's credibility by giving him more reason to approach the heroes. (Perhaps he has spoken with someone the PCs assisted earlier.)

Scene Two: Meefing Reynard

When Ambrose departs, the heroes should be given a few minutes to talk among themselves. No doubt some will favor helping the lad while others will be more cautious. When this conversation winds down, the heroes notice that a squad of city watchmen has gathered around them—and there's one guard for every hero.

The hulking soldiers part, and a slender figure in the uniform of a captain steps forward. He bows to the player characters with a sweep of his feathered hat. With a most endearing smile, he introduces himself as Captain Reynard.

Reynard appears to know that they have been talking to young Ambrose. With a sad look on his face, he explains the sad story of poor Baron Descartes and his son. According to Reynard, Ambrose is mentally ill. This is not the first time that he has sneaked out of his home. He encourages them to ignore the boy's claims.

Reynard asks the heroes to return the invitations to the costume party, since they were stolen by the boy. "Besides," he adds, "you would not be comfortable among those who were rightfully invited." (The heroes aren't elite.) If the heroes keep the invitations, Reynard shrugs off the matter. Before departing, however, he cautions them to do nothing that would upset the Baron or his guests.

Note: Reynard is "hired muscle," though he has no idea what's really going on. The golem Descarte—who of course serves du Cire—employs Reynard for protec-

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tion. If the heroes ever find out the truth and convince Reynard what's going on, he may become an ally.

Scene Three: The Costume Ball

The epitome of opulence, Descartes Manor is a sprawling estate overlooking the sea and the city. The guests at the ball wear a bewildering array of costumes, all of which feature gems, jewels, gold, and silver. If the heroes are not equally well attired, they'll stand out.

Tonight the entire estate seems surreal and macabre. Some of the costumes depict aspects of the supernatural while others are merely disturbing. One of the guests at the party is du Cire's double, but at this point the heroes have no reason to interact with him.

Over the course of the evening, the heroes should have a chance to mingle and engage in polite conversation. It becomes apparent that "everyone who is anyone" is here. Eventually the heroes notice that Captain Reynard is here too, and that he and a few guests (Reynard's agents) are watching the heroes at all times.

At some point, the heroes meet Baron Descarte. Although they don't know him, they should notice that he seems to be somewhat distant. Of course, this could be the burden of playing host to so many people, or perhaps he is not fond of "party crashers." All in all, the heroes won't come up with any reason to suspect that the Baron is anything other than he appears to be.

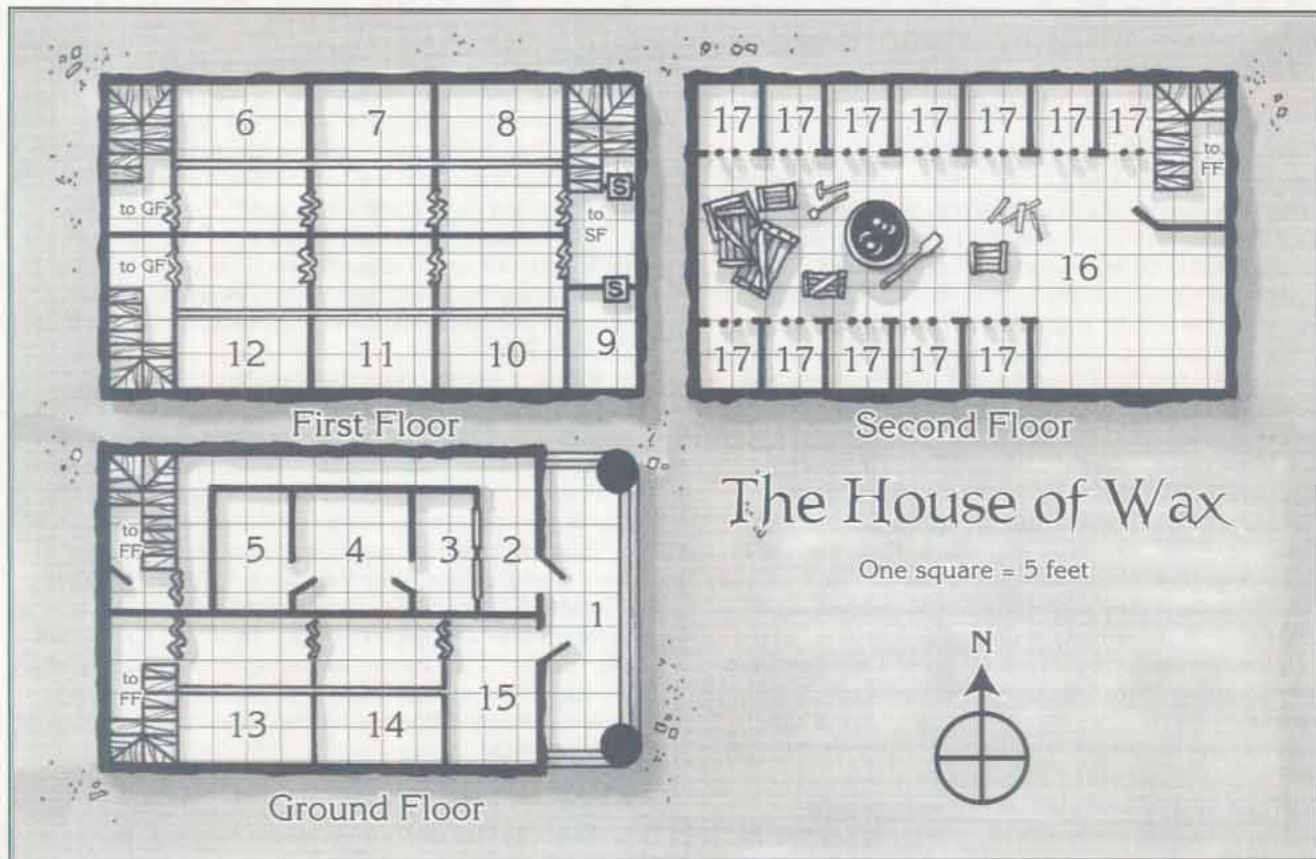
Young Ambrose is at the party. Although he doesn't get a chance to speak with the heroes for any great length of time, he's clearly relieved to see them here and repeats his concerns. Nothing about the boy seems to support Reynard's belief that Ambrose is unbalanced.

After the heroes leave the manor, they meet Reynard again—and he intends to teach them a lesson.

Scene Four: Reynard Gets Tough

Captain Reynard's employer, Baron Descarte, is very unhappy with the potential threat the heroes pose. He instructs Reynard to teach the heroes a lesson. Reynard's first choice is to get one of the heroes alone outside the party (or perhaps later, on some deserted street) and make an example of him or her with a bit of roughing up. After making his "point," he'll simply issue a warning not to cause any further trouble, and wish the battered hero a good evening. Should the heroes split up and explore the grounds—perhaps by following Baron Descarte, Reynard may make his move then.

If that doesn't seem possible, Reynard may content himself with more threat and less action. He and his men will close in and insist the heroes stay away from the Descarte family. If the heroes do not agree, a brawl is likely to ensue. If this takes place at the party, some of the guests may draw firearms. It's quite possible the heroes will become fugitives after this encounter.



In the very unlikely event that the heroes are scared off by Reynard's threats, the adventure may come to an end. If you wish to keep things going, however, then Alexandre du Cire could contact the heroes and invite them to pose for figures in the House of Wax. You will have to sew things back together based on the action of the heroes at that point.

But it's much more likely that the heroes will choose to press on with their investigation. The most obvious course of action is a covert search of Descarte Manor.

Scene Five: Searching the Manor

In this "dungeon crawl," the heroes break into Descarte Manor and search for clues. Strive to maintain tension and suspense. Every shadow could conceal a clue—or trigger an alarm. As the heroes go from room to room, they should sense they're in constant peril of being discovered. Guard dogs, sentries, and wandering servants all pose a threat; position them as you please. If the heroes are careful, however, they won't get caught.

During the course of their investigation, the heroes learn that Ambrose is right: the Baron is acting strangely. The behavior seems linked to Alexandre du Cire. They can discover that Baron Descarte was recently invited to attend a private showing of the newest exhibit at the House of Wax. Apparently, Descarte had advanced du Cire a sizable sum for the creation of the tableau. A careful examination of Descarte's records will make it clear that the Baron stopped paying attention to many of his personal affairs in the days after the visit to the wax museum.

The heroes' means of obtaining this information depends on the search they undertake. In Descarte's private quarters, they may find a journal that mentions a visit to the museum, though the entries end on the corresponding date. (Descarte's golem has not bothered to add to the journal.) If the heroes move into the Baron's den, where his business affairs are dealt with, they might find financial papers or personal letters. Eavesdropping may also lead them to a few clues; people in the household talk of Descarte's strange behavior in private.

In any case, however, the heroes should find themselves pointed in the direction of Alexandre du Cire's House of Wax. If they opt to explore the museum by day, paying their admission and touring the exhibits as customers, go to Scene Six. If they decide to sneak into the place under cover of darkness, skip ahead to Scene Seven.

Scene Six: The House of Wax

The House of Wax bills itself as "a Museum of the Macabre." Du Cire plays up the effect with dim lighting and sinister music. The tableaux depict the noble lords and ladies of Ravenloft as well as many of its greatest villains. As explained above, the nature of the scenes

should be based upon the experiences of the heroes.

Despite the appearance of menace, as ordinary customers, they're in no real danger. Naturally that changes as soon as they cause trouble or start poking their noses into places they shouldn't go. Du Cire keeps a security guard stationed on the first floor (see "Using the Map"). Three women work in the office. All four are wax golems.

If the heroes ask to meet with du Cire, this can be arranged; he often speaks to customers. Even the real du Cire seemed like a suspicious fellow, because he cultivated that image. The duplicate does the same. If they ask about Descarte's visit to the museum, du Cire denies that it ever took place. He does not deny that an invitation was issued, only that the Baron arrived. Du Cire says that he asked about the matter at the costume party and was told that the Baron claimed to have had business on the docks.

This is, of course, utterly untrue and is meant to send the heroes on a wild goose chase. When the heroes go off to pursue this line of investigation, they will find themselves ambushed by du Cire's minions.

After the heroes have finished the customary tour of the House of Wax, they'll probably remain suspicious. To investigate further, they can explore the areas of the museum not open to the public (see Scene Seven).

Note that the heroes may have tipped their hand during their visit to the House of Wax. If they have given du Cire any reason to suspect them, it's a good bet du Cire will command one or more of his golems to attack them. If you feel up to the challenge, don't stop at a mere security guard; you can create wax golems in the shape of wolves, bats, and crows, and more.

Scene Seven: After Hours

A normal tour of the House of Wax won't reveal the museum's secrets. To succeed, the heroes must sneak into private areas.

As the heroes investigate, they'll discover that the museum is indeed a terrible place. Several "false alarm" encounters should take place on the ground and first floors. At the very least, the heroes should mistake one of the wax statues for a living (or undead) menace.

At some point before they reach the second floor workshop (area 16 on the map), the heroes should be challenged by what appears to be a cleaning woman. She's slight, stooped, and darned convincing; the heroes should believe she poses no threat. They might even treat the matter with some levity. Of course, all that will change when she attacks them with the strength and ferocity of a wax golem.

After they've dealt with this encounter, the heroes are free to make their way to the workshop. As soon as they reach that area, they discover three dozen folks stuffed into the cells lining the room, all twitching on the floor. The area reeks. If the heroes have destroyed any wax golems, the corresponding flesh-and-blood

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originals cry out for help. Unfortunately, some may be little more than raving lunatics at this point.

Next, the heroes find young Ambrose Descarte, tied to a chair with a gag in his mouth. On a table nearby lies a featureless wax figure, clearly the boy's size. Because du Cire has not begun work on the replica, the boy has not lost any memories yet. As soon as the heroes start to free Ambrose, he exclaims that his father dragged him here—but maybe it's not his father after all (the real Baron Descarte is in one of the cells).

As soon as Ambrose is free, du Cire and the fake Baron arrive to herald the conclusion of the adventure.

Scene Eight: The Nightmare Ends

The adventure reaches a climax when the heroes battle du Cire, the Baron, and perhaps another golem or two in the workshop. This is an unusual setting; use all the tools at your disposal to make the scene memorable. The workshop includes bubbling vats of liquid wax, large blocks of paraffin, plenty of sculpting tools, costumes, makeup, and crates packed with supplies.

Ambrose Descarte plays a pivotal role in the fight. Neither du Cire nor the Baron will hesitate to threaten or harm the boy if they believe it will lead them to victory. And even if the villains can't snag him outright, Ambrose is bound to do something stupid and put himself in peril. If the heroes are to live up to the ideals of their profession, they'll have to keep the boy alive and, hopefully, unhurt.

Ultimately, the heroes should triumph. If you can manage it deftly, let the final struggle cause one of the vats to topple over and burst into flames. As the blaze spreads, the heroes must work quickly to save the mindless prisoners. Even after that, the job is not done. Each of the prisoners has a matching golem. The heroes—and Reynard, if they bother to recruit him—can hunt down and destroy the rest of the duplicates.

Recurrence

With this adventure behind them, the heroes can rest assured that the menace of du Cire's wax golems has ended. Or can they? Here are two ideas for bringing back the horrors:

- Du Cire has a second, secret prison for special victims—leaving a number of golems undetected. As soon as the heroes move on, things will begin to go wrong again, after one of the remaining creatures steps forward to replace du Cire.
- The real du Cire has been left a bit unbalanced by the whole experience. One would hope that he has learned his lesson. But what if the reverse was true? What if Alexandre du Cire begins to experiment with living wax again—intentionally? Perhaps he loses a hand in an accident and replaces it with one of wax. In time, the stuff might even grow to engulf him or take control of his mind.

Using the Map

The legend below briefly describes the areas labeled on the accompanying map. Before play, flesh out these descriptions and jot down notes about the encounters.

1. Entrance: By design, the front of the House of Wax looks intimidating and spooky. During business hours, a professional barker stands outside (in a horrific costume), trying to lure customers inside. The barker is not a wax golem, and he has no idea what secret horrors lurk in the House of Wax.

2. Ticket Windows: Patrons of the wax museum stop here to pay their admission, 5 copper pieces each. A pair of barred windows separates the ticket sales people from the customers.

3. Ticket Office: During normal office hours, one woman sits here selling tickets. If it's busy, a second woman joins her at the other window. Both women are wax golems who look frail and almost helpless.

4. Business Office: A scribe/clerk is usually here poring over ledgers, and during slow times, the second ticket woman hangs out here. Both are wax golems.

5. Du Cire's Office: Du Cire keeps the normal records for the museum here. A search reveals incriminating evidence, such as a list of prominent citizens. Those who have been replaced are crossed off.

6–8. Tableaus: Du Cire has created three horrific scenes. Like areas 10 to 13, their exact nature should reflect the fears and past experiences of the heroes (see "Give 'em What They Want").

9. Surveillance: The burly security guard is posted here. He can see into the exhibit areas via several periscopes and will act promptly to halt potential vandals or intruders. He is a wax golem and carries a firearm similar to Du Cire's.

10–13. Tableaus: More horrific scenes designed to frighten and thrill customers.

14. Heroes on Display: This depicts some aspect of a past adventure, featuring wax images of one or more heroes. Any character viewing his or her double should feel pretty darned uneasy.

15. Exit Display: The last exhibit in the museum shows du Cire covering living prisoners with boiling hot wax so that he might put them on display. The real du Cire always thought of it as something of a joke. As things stand, it might mislead the heroes as they attempt to understand how the golems are created.

16. Workshop: This serves as both the holding area for the shivering shells of those who have been replaced and the workshop in which their counterparts were made. The room contains numerous crates of wax, tools, and so on. A large vat of bubbling wax boils over a bed of glowing coals, filling the air with thick fumes.

17. Cells: These paddocks were constructed quickly and crudely with wood salvaged from broken crates. The cells don't have to be strong; the prisoners are usually pretty helpless. Each prisoner has a soiled mat or some dry straw, designed to muffle the twitching.

DOPPLEGANGER GOLEM

Progress, therefore, is not an accident, but a necessity.

—Herbert Spencer

BIOGRAPHY



Horror has many faces. A man who once attempted to steal van Richten's brain lives on, though many have presumed him dead. Now he is cobbling together a body built from the land's most consummate deceivers. He shall be a god unto his creation, yet he shall be its greatest fool.

Emil Bollenbach

Madman and Golem Creator, Lawful Evil

Armor Class	8	Str	12
Movement	12	Dex	16
Level/Hit Dice	2	Con	11
Hit Points	10	Int	18
THACO	19	Wis	16
Morale	10	Cha	11
No. of Attacks	1	XP	65
Damage/Attack	By weapon		
Special Attacks	Surprise		
Special Defenses	Nil		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

Doppelganger Golem

"Super-golem," Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	2	Str	20
Movement	12	Dex	18
Level/Hit Dice	9	Con	20
Hit Points	65	Int	8
THACO	11	Wis	3
Morale	13	Cha	Varies
No. of Attacks	2	XP	7,000
Damage/Attack	2d8+1/2d8+1		
Special Attacks	Nil		
Special Defenses	+1 or better weapon to hit; immune to poison and mind- and life-affecting spells; +4 to all saving throws against physical damage, including spells; hyper-regeneration; shapeshifting		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

Appearance

Emil Bollenbach is a slim and fine-featured man whose unruly red hair is streaked with gray. Otherwise handsome, he suffers from a nervous tic that draws up one side of his mouth, and the tic, when coupled with the insane gleam in his eye, sorely diminishes his appeal. His clothes are typically rumpled or disheveled,

and when he's working in his laboratory he wears a bloodstained apron.

Bollenbach's masterpiece, the doppelganger golem, resembles a hideously scarred Ravenloft doppelganger when in its natural state. In short, it's a sexless humanoid with rubbery ash-gray skin, sunken eyes, pointed ears, and a mouthful of needle-sharp teeth. However, the golem gradually adopts the shape of humanoid beings it fights, so others don't often see it in this natural form.

Background

Almost two decades ago, Emil Bollenbach attended a lecture by Dr. Rudolph van Richten, the famous scholar of the macabre, on the topic of golems. The subject fascinated young Bollenbach, who was a gifted medical student at the time. He volunteered to help van Richten study, track, and destroy these creations of evil.

For two years, Emil divided his time between his studies and assisting van Richten with his research and golem hunts. Then, one night, they tracked a series of murders to the medical school Bollenbach was attending, and the young man discovered that a



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professor he had admired was, in fact, a killer who was building a flesh golem. Worse yet, when Bollenbach and van Richten came face to face with the mad professor's nightmarish creation, its head was that of a close friend who had mysteriously vanished a few months earlier. Bollenbach's mind snapped, and he fled screaming from the scene, apparently perishing when the mad scientist's lab was transformed into a fiery inferno during the battle with van Richten.

Bollenbach, however, survived. Unbalanced by his horrific experience, he decided that only another golem could defeat the Created that madmen were assembling throughout the land. (The irony that he would soon join the ranks of such madmen escaped him.) He made it his life's work to build a "super-golem." He established a laboratory and began experimenting with building golems of different types. Insane as he was, he did not realize that his experiments were simply adding more golems to the world. In his mind, the ends justified the means; for one day his "super-golem" would clean up his mess, destroying byproducts of the "necessary experiments" along with all other golems in the land.

Bollenbach completed his first "super-golem" nearly fifteen years ago and attempted to transfer van Richten's fine mind into the body. His scheme was thwarted by some of the doctor's adventuring companions, and Bollenbach once again escaped apparent death.

Keeping a low profile because of the adventurers, Bollenbach slowly rebuilt capacity for experiments and research. In the process, he became aware of a strange race of shapeshifters that lived undetected among the other races of his world—evil beings known as doppelgangers. He observed how they could assume any form, and the ability inspired him. Bollenbach became convinced that he had finally discovered the perfect formula for creating a "super-golem." Instead of creating a being that could outthink other golems, as he had attempted earlier, he would build one that could outfight other golems by assuming their strengths during combat!

Bollenbach allied himself with a group of doppelgangers that were despicable even by the standards of their kind. These murderous creatures began to hunt other doppelgangers throughout the domains of the Core, delivering to Bollenbach the raw materials he needed for his experiments. As this adventure begins, the creatures' work for Bollenbach is almost done, for the creator needs just one more piece to complete his masterpiece: the doppelganger golem!

Personality

Bollenbach seems distracted and twitchy even when calm, and when he's agitated, he becomes a ranting lunatic. Always hyperactive and moving, he constantly mutters, thinking out loud or engaging in conversations with himself. His weirdest trait is to utter perversions of

common sayings, such as "A body in the lab is better than two in the bush" or "A transplant a day keeps the reaper away." He also tends to burst out laughing for no discernible reason. He considers his work of the utmost importance, believing only he can stop the evil of the Created, as only he possesses the vision and genius necessary to create the sole means of their defeat.

The doppelganger golem's personality develops along with the plot of the adventure. When it is first brought to life, it is a mindless killing machine, obeying its creator's orders and heeding his will without hesitation. Through their telepathic link, the creature understands who, or what, Emil wishes it to destroy. Through combat, however, the golem begins to develop a personality, one that consists of fragments of the beings it has battled.

Ironically, these personalities will not come from other golems for some time. However, if Bollenbach and his creature survive this adventure, he will set his creation to the task for which it was designed. In the process, the creature will absorb the hatred the other golems have for their creators. Bollenbach will eventually lose control of his doppelganger golem, and after it slays him, it will embark on a quest to systematically kill all doctors and scientists in the Core, whether they are golem builders or not.

Combat

Bollenbach always attempts to flee if confronted by foes, leaving hirelings and his creations to deal with the threat. He does not flee out of cowardice—at least that is what he tells himself. Rather, he flees because it is prudent. His efforts to create the ultimate golem are much too important for him to risk being slaughtered by a group of misguided cutthroats who consider themselves heroes. (He always carries 10,000 gp in gems on his person, so if forced to flee, he can rebuild somewhere else.)

If cornered, Bollenbach defends himself with a scalpel, inflicting 1d3 points of damage with a successful hit. He may also defend himself using his psionic wild talent, *switch personality* (for which he has the *contact* and *mindlink* prerequisites). While he cannot control this power, if he's cornered near one of his works in progress—a golem not yet brought to life—he will transfer his essence into its body. Bollenbach is then trapped in the golem for thirteen hours while his own body lies in a coma, but he can rise up if he chooses. If his true body should die during this time, he will be trapped in the golem forever.

The doppelganger golem enjoys all the standard combat abilities and resistances of a flesh golem. It also has the doppelganger's habit of assuming new shapes, with a unique twist. In this case, the golem slowly assumes the appearance of an enemy during combat. As the doppelganger golem battles any humanoid foe, some part of the golem changes to match its opponent,

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and then another part changes, and so on, until the golem has entirely adopted the shape of the character it is fighting. The complete transformation takes six combat rounds, so it is possible for the doppelganger golem to resemble several different beings at once. (For example, if the doppelganger golem has assumed the shape of a scarred flesh golem, and then it fights and defeats a gnoll in three rounds, the victor will appear to be half-gnoll, half-flesh golem.)

Whenever the doppelganger golem begins a new combat, roll 1d6 to see which body part changes first. Then roll at the beginning of each subsequent round to see which part changes next (reroll as needed to avoid repeats, or improvise). 1—head; 2—left arm; 3—torso; 4—right arm; 5—left leg; 6—right leg.

Unlike true doppelgangers, the doppelganger golem gains any spell immunity or resistance the form it is mimicking possesses naturally—without losing its own strengths and immunities. If the golem has not yet fully changed, however, it possesses only its usual qualities. A horror check may be in order the first time a hero spies the golem as it's transforming.

Like many powerful golems, this creature can hyper-regenerate. If its hit point total drops below 0, it begins to regenerate 10 points per round until it is fully healed. It can rise up as soon as it reaches 0 again, but it prefers to wait until it has fully recovered.

A TRULY TWISTED TALE



his adventure can take place in any large town the heroes are visiting within the Core. It is designed for three to five characters of levels 5 to 8. Additional heroes can easily be added, and one or two of them can be as powerful as 10th level. However, no one should be as weak as 4th level unless he or she is prepared to die.

The Adventure Begins

The adventure begins just before Bollenbach completes his golem; he needs only one more part. He has set up a secret headquarters in the town the heroes are visiting. While the heroes are spending time there, an old man and his daughter approach them. The man looks as old and frail as the girl appears young and delicate. Clearly, they are not the adventuring kind.

The old man introduces himself as Hans DeFoe. He tells the heroes that he has heard they are powerful defenders of all that is good and right. If the heroes are distrustful or ask how he knows of them, Hans drops the name of a local personality with whom the heroes have had dealings. He then begs them to protect him and his daughter, Annabelle, from a band of insane killers who have been stalking them for reasons beyond his comprehension. The killers have already murdered his

daughter's husband-to-be, he says. He is not a rich man, he adds, but he can give the heroes 200 gp if they will safely escort him and Annabelle to another city in a different domain.

The truth of the matter is this: Hans and Annabelle are not as defenseless as they wish to appear, but they are in grave danger. They are actually a pair of doppelgangers seeking protection from Bollenbach's murderous stalkers.

Dealing with the DeFoes

This is a simple matter: either the heroes help the DeFoes or they do not. The heroes might be suspicious of the pair, but if they ask around they'll learn that Hans is a respected violin teacher, while his daughter was engaged to marry a musician. Unfortunately, her fiancé recently drowned when he fell overboard from a riverboat. Locals confirm that the DeFoes have been claiming mysterious assassins are after them, but the town's constabulary has failed to uncover any evidence of such a threat and has ruled the death of the fiancé accidental. The character who referred Hans and Annabelle to the heroes says that he or she has known the father and child for some time, and that he or she believes their story, whether it can be proved or not. (This character has no idea that the DeFoes he or she once knew are actually dead; the doppelgangers recently took their place in an effort to shake Bollenbach's agents. The new Annabelle killed the fiancé herself when he discovered her true nature.)

If the heroes decide to help the DeFoes, the two place themselves completely in their hands, keeping up the pretense of being helpless victims of insane stalkers. Both father and daughter agree to whatever security precautions the heroes suggest, and they gather a bare minimum of belongings from their small home in order to travel as lightly as possible.

As the heroes and the DeFoes are almost ready to strike out for whatever destination they've picked, a group of masked thugs descend upon them. The ambush takes place not far from the city gates, in a part of the city that's crowded with buildings and twisting alleys. The thugs' tactics are as follows:

- Two men with crossbows are stationed on opposite sides of the street. They fire at the heroes from second-floor windows. They hope to make the heroes start rushing down the street, or to force them to seek cover. The shooters flee once they've done their duty. (Later, they'll show up again at Bollenbach's lair.)
- Two hooded fighters for each hero leap out of alleys and attack them. The fighters have orders to keep the heroes busy until Hans and Annabelle have been abducted. Each time one of their numbers falls, the remaining fighters each make morale checks with a -1 cumulative penalty. Those who fail a check engage in fighting retreats.

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- Four other hooded figures—the dopplegangers working with Bollenbach—attack Hans and Annabelle. The attackers overwhelm the pair, using weapons that have been coated with a paralytic poison. Heroes who have stated they are trying to protect the old violin teacher and his daughter can roll Intelligence checks to notice how surprisingly well the two defend themselves. Still, after two rounds of combat, Hans and Annabelle both fall. The attackers swiftly swing their limp victims over their shoulders and flee into the alley. *Do not allow any of the attacking dopplegangers to be captured or killed in this combat.* Their nature should remain a secret until later in the adventure.
- Surviving fighters break off combat and make a fighting retreat. Heroes who make successful Intelligence checks realize that their foes are trying to withdraw. Allow the heroes to overwhelm at least one fighter, and give them a chance to spare his life if they think to question him. Only these fighters can reveal the location of Bollenbach's lair to the heroes. If the heroes fail to capture one of the fighters alive, they lose their chance to face Bollenbach before he releases his doppleganger golem.

Crossbowmen, male humans T2 (2): AC 8 (Dex +2); hp 18, 14; THACO 20 (19 w/crossbow); #AT 1 (heavy crossbow); Dmg 1d4+1; SZ M; ML elite (13); Int high (14); AL LE; XP 65 each.

Special Abilities: PP 25%, OL 20%, F/RT 10%, MS 35%, HS 40%, DN 15%, CW 65%, RL 0%.

Hired Thugs, male and female humans F2 (2 per hero): AC 5 (chainmail); MV 12; hp 15 each; THACO 19; #AT 1 (short swords); Dmg 1d6; SZ M; ML elite (13); Int avg (10); AL LE; XP 35.

Special Equipment: 1d6+25 gp each.

Ravenloft Dopplegangers (4): AC 5; MV 12; HD 5; hp 33, 30, 28, 27; THACO 15; #AT 1 (fist or short sword); Dmg 1d12 or 1d6+paralytic poison; SA surprise; SD ESP, immune to *sleep* and *charm* spells, save as 10th-level fighter; SZ varies; ML elite (13); Int high (14); AL NE; XP 975.

Hot Pursuit: If the heroes pursue the kidnappers as soon as the thugs disengage their attack, they venture into a twisting maze of back-alleys where lower-class women, waifs, and old beggars—all dirty and rag-clad—retreat fearfully into the doorways. The people point their bony, grubby fingers to indicate the direction in which the abductors have fled, and if the heroes stay on the trail, they eventually find a trembling Annabelle sprawled in their path. She appears to be slowly recovering from the effects of the poison, and her cuts continue to ooze blood.

Annabelle claims that she mustered all her inner strength and broke free, and because the heroes were so

close behind, her captors chose to abandon her and continue on with her father. She indicates the direction in which they fled, and as the heroes turn the corner into another alley, a slouching beggar points the way so they can continue the pursuit. But that way leads them to a crowded main street where no one seems to have seen the abductors. If the heroes retrace their steps, the slouching beggar has vanished. The truth is, both “trembling Annabelle” and the beggar are actually two kidnappers who have altered their forms to delay the heroes.

“Annabelle” feigns near-hysteria, begging the heroes to rescue her father, although she claims not to know where he has been taken or why. Her emotional state and total lack of combat and adventuring experience should make the heroes want *not* to be burdened by her while attempting to track the father. (The doppleganger is hoping the heroes will leave “poor Annabelle” someplace safe so they can investigate unburdened. He then plans to rejoin his fellows at Bollenbach's lair.)

A Necessary Lead: If the heroes have failed to capture a thug, consult the “Recurrence” section of this adventure. If they did catch a thug, the man pleads for his life. He says he and his buddies were paid handsomely to help catch the “old coot and his daughter.” Their employer asked them to meet the four other fellows (the kidnappers) at an abandoned mill a few miles outside of town. The thug hopes to buy his life with this information, along with an offer to give them 25 gp, his payment for the job. He provides detailed directions to the mill but would rather not go there himself. (He doesn't argue too hard if the party insists, however.) He knows nothing about the defenses of the place, but like many locals, he does know the mill has supposedly been haunted for many years (see below). He has never met his employer directly, only a representative, and he has never seen the kidnappers before this job.

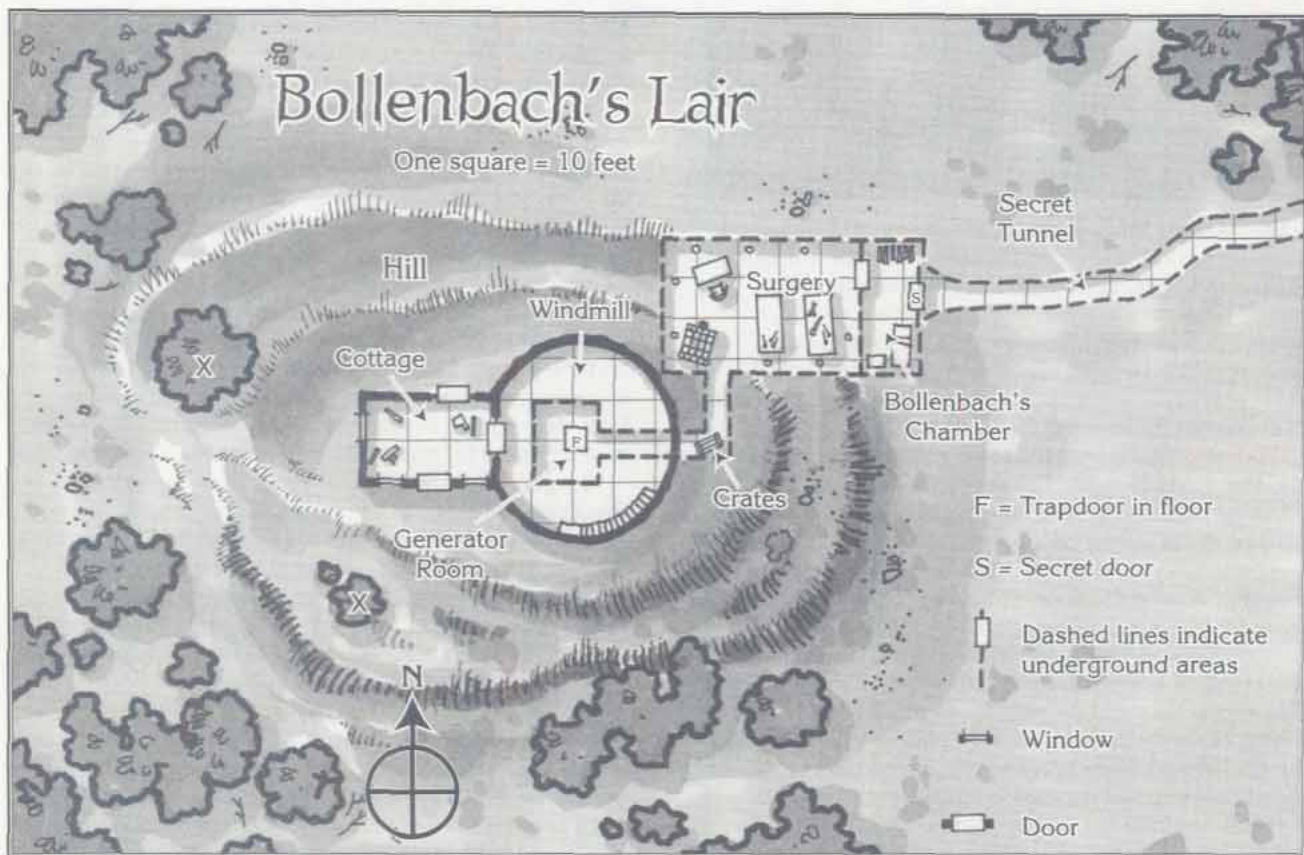
Bollenbach's Lair

The thug's directions lead the heroes to an abandoned windmill two miles outside of town. The strong wind that has been blowing all day is approaching storm proportions. Occasional raindrops fall from the heavy clouds, and the wind drives the droplets so hard that they feel like hailstones when they strike the heroes.

According to local rumor, the young miller and his wife killed each other during a quarrel several years ago; each had accused the other of being unfaithful, and their mutual jealousy caused their spirits to fuse into a two-headed, four-armed ghost that haunts the mill to this day. The ghost even maintains the mill's sails in the dead of night, legend says. The truth is far more twisted.

A few months after the couple killed each other, Emil Bollenbach moved into the windmill. It was a perfect location for his new lab. All he needed was something to ensure his privacy, so he, in one of his many exercises of humor, stole the corpses of the couple from

DOPPLEGANGER GOLEM



the local cemetery and used them to create a two-headed golem. The creature was quite capable of slaying most who would dare investigate the abandoned mill. As an added benefit, its appearance started the rumor about the misshapen ghost when glimpses were caught of it from afar.

With his privacy assured, Bollenbach went about his twisted task. Years have passed since he began his work in the mill. Now, on this night, he will finally complete his insane goal and unleash a monstrous golem the likes of which the world has never seen.

The worn sails of the windmill are turning furiously as the heroes approach. The trees surrounding the mill shiver in the powerful wind, and dead leaves race down the hill upon which it stands. The mill and the small shack attached to its side do indeed look abandoned, except that the sails are still working. And as the thug said, there do not appear to be any guards.

Looks can be deceiving, however. Although Bollenbach does not normally post guards, tonight he is particularly sensitive about being disturbed, and the two thieves who fired crossbows during the ambushes are on duty. Refer to the accompanying map; each is hiding in one of trees marked with an X. Once all the heroes have passed their position, the thieves quietly drop from the trees, and, using their ability to move silently, they sneak toward the rear of the party. When close, they hide in the shadows and lie in wait . . . until someone

opens the door to area 1. That causes the two-headed flesh golem to attack. In the confusion, the thieves immediately move to backstab two characters near the rear of the party.

If either thief is taken alive, he does not know what lies inside the windmill. Like the thugs in town, these two men have never actually been inside; they have only met with representatives of their unknown boss on the hillside. Unlike the thugs, they *do* know about the flesh golem lurking within.

Into the Lair

These encounters are keyed to the accompanying map. They follow the path to the climactic showdown with Bollenbach's greatest creation.

Cottage: This one-room cottage used to be the home of the miller and his family. Now it houses one of Bollenbach's monstrous creations. The creature has demolished most of the structure's interior due to restless boredom. The walls and ceiling are covered with stains left by unidentifiable materials.

As soon as a hero opens the door or simply peeks through one of the dirt-streaked windows, the creature attacks with lightning speed. The hero should roll for surprise, and all party members should roll horror checks as the monstrosity with a torso that's part male and part female strikes from the darkness.

DOPPLEGANGER GOLEM

Two-Headed Flesh Golem: AC 0; MV 8; HD 13+2; hp 67; THAC0 7; #AT 2 (fists); Dmg 1d12; SA disease touch; SD regeneration (1 hp/hour), +1 or better magical weapon to hit, immune to poison, cold, electricity, disease, and mind- and life-affecting spells; ML fearless (19); Int animal (1); AL CE; XP 9,000.

The hideous flesh golem is an engine of destruction, possessing two brains. Both brains are single-mindedly devoted to following Bollenbach's command: *Slay anyone who tries to enter the mill.* In play, consider the creature two different characters; it receives two separate initiative rolls, each for a single attack that takes place during the appropriate segment. The golem never checks for morale.

Windmill: Like the ramshackle cottage attached to its side, the windmill is filled with shattered bits of furniture and other debris. The millstone has been removed from its place at the center of the mill, and the shaft that would normally connect to it has been extended through a hole in the floor. The shaft is spinning furiously, and if the heroes climb up a set of rickety stairs, they can see the gears overhead that translate the turning of the mill's sails to the motion in the shaft. (This second level of the mill is not mapped, as there is nothing of significance here. However, the heroes might stop Bollenbach from bringing the doppelganger golem to life by jamming the gears immediately after they enter the windmill.)

If the heroes examine the hole in the floor, a strange odor (ozone) and a bizarre crackling noise come from below. A trapdoor that is not secured or trapped in any way opens to a ladder leading down to the generator room.

Generator Room: A dimly flickering torch lights this chamber, leaving much of it cloaked in shadow. In the center of the room stands a large metal box. The rotating shaft from area 2 vanishes into the box, and the crackling noise emanates from within. Thick cords extend from the box's side, running along the floor and down a hallway before they vanish around a corner. A light from somewhere down the passage casts its faint glow into the corner, revealing the shape of several large crates.

One of the Bollenbach's murderous doppelgangers lies inside one of the crates. If the heroes open the crate, "Hans" feigns grogginess, as though he is just waking up. He gazes up at the heroes with apparent shock and amazement, then asks what has happened to dear Annabelle (with very convincing concern). He claims to have no idea why he was put in the crate, though he fears his captors will soon return to finish him off.

Besides rickety old "Hans," the crate contains nothing. Remaining crates in the room contain three sacks, each holding 2d4 severed limbs. The limbs appear vaguely humanoid, but the flesh is grayish white, rubbery, and has a peculiar texture. The severed ends lack all signs of blood, and the flesh does not stink of decay. (These are rejected doppelganger parts.) The (new) doppelganger "Hans" continues to play his role to the

hilt until he has one of the heroes alone, or until combat breaks out. Then he assumes the appearance of the hero he is battling and goes for the kill.

The metal box contains a primitive generator. As the mill shaft turns, the generator creates the electricity Bollenbach will use to bring his doppelganger golem to life. The box poses little danger unless a hero opens the access panel on its side and reaches inside. Anyone touching the coiled copper wires within suffers 4d6 points of electrical damage.

As the heroes search this area, a burst of energy surges through the room. The air becomes charged, and the heroes' fine hairs stand straight up as the thick wires jerk and dance for a few moments. Blue light flickers from around the corner, where a man gives an excited cheer followed by a bellow of maniacal laughter.

Surgery: Several lanterns hang from metal hooks on the stone walls of this room, creating a smoky yellow light. The furniture consists of two long tables, a writing desk and chair, and a large cage in one corner. A variety of surgical implements—many of which may be more reminiscent of torture devices than medical tools in the eyes of players—lie scattered about both tables. The door to the adjoining area is closed.

The heroes face more than mere objects, however. Thanks to this room's many inhabitants, a lot will happen in quick succession the moment the adventurers arrive. On one table lies the doppelganger golem. The wires that ran along the hallway to this room are attached to its head and torso. Bollenbach stands over his masterwork, shaking his fists and crying out. On the adjacent table lies a dead doppelganger with its head split open like a melon. The brain appears to be missing. (This is what became of Hans number one, who first approached the heroes.)

Bollenbach is not working alone. Three kidnappers squat on the floor near the cage. They've been playing a dice game, and a few copper pieces lie scattered on the floor between them. Further, the cage is not empty; Annabelle is cowering within. Her presence may shock and confuse the heroes if they believe they put her in a safe place back in town. This is, however, the "Annabelle" they originally agreed to help.

(Confused? The doppelganger who posed as the bleeding, battered Annabelle in order to stall the heroes in the city is now playing dice. "She" left the city immediately after the heroes did, returning here in great haste and entering through the secret tunnel. Of course, if that isn't possible for some reason—for example, if the heroes killed that doppelganger—then only two kidnappers are playing dice.)

If the current "Hans," actually the fourth kidnapper, is with the party, he assumes the shape of the hero nearest him and attacks. If the party never checked the crate in the generator room, this doppelganger sneaks up and still attacks the hero at the rear of the party after assuming his (or her) shape. The heroes may have to make a horror check upon being confronted with themselves. (The horror stems not just from the surprise—

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but also from the realization that their companions may soon be mistaking *them* for doppelgangers.)

The Golem Rises: Assuming the heroes have not jammed the windmill's gears, Bollenbach is uttering cries of joy as the heroes enter, and they arrive in time to see the doppelganger golem jerk into a seated position. Fresh sutures and burn marks ring its skull, and scars crisscross its rubbery arms and torso.

As the kidnappers move to attack the heroes, Bollenbach orders his latest and greatest creation to attack as well. Then, he escapes through the door to the adjacent chamber, shouting, "You will find me when those who would stop our glorious and righteous quest have been vanquished. The apple is never far from the tree, no matter where he roams!"

He slams the door and locks it, laughing maniacally. The heroes must fight their way past the newly created golem and Bollenbach's doppelganger henchmen before they can pursue the madman.

Gears are Jammed: If the heroes jammed the windmill's gears earlier, an entirely different scene unfolds. The kidnappers are grudgingly ending their dice game as the heroes enter the room. The golem does not rise, and Bollenbach starts ranting at the heroes as his doppelganger minions attack him.

"No!" he screams. "You small-minded ignorant fools! You will not be allowed to stop me *again!* I am doing this for the good of the world! My creation will destroy the other monstrosities! Can't you see? Can't you—" The sentence ends in a gurgle as Bollenbach collapses in the throes of a seizure. After a few moments, his body is deathly still. Then the golem stirs—Bollenbach's mind has been transferred to his creation. Feeling that his life's work is more important than killing the heroes, he scoops up his own body and flees to the chamber.

Annabelle's Web of Lies: After the battle with the kidnappers has ended, the caged Annabelle does her best to gain the heroes' sympathy. She sticks with the role of a human Annabelle as long as possible. If they doubt who she is after the incident in the city, she explains a doppelganger took her place. If they guess the truth—that she, too, is a doppelganger—she still tries to convince them she is human, and that she didn't know her father had been replaced by a doppelganger.

If that doesn't work, and the heroes still insist she's lying, she reluctantly admits they're right. Then she shifts into a different female form (one that is extraordinarily comely), and claims to be a wolfwere. She says she was afraid to reveal her true identity; after all, heroes don't often take kindly to wolfweres. She was trying to protect her friend Hans from the "evil doppelgangers working with Bollenbach" and had no idea what was truly happening until recently. She claims she had nothing to do with the death of the real Annabelle, her fiancé, or her father, but that the doppelganger Hans committed those murders while trying to save himself from his pursuers.

She offers to help the heroes hunt down Bollenbach, and if she has "admitted" to being a wolfwere, she begs

them to let her seek vengeance. (In truth, she will escape from the heroes' company at the earliest possible moment.) If attacked, Annabelle defends herself to the best of her ability, fighting to the death.

Bollenbach's Chamber: When Bollenbach retreats to this chamber, he locks the door behind him. The lock is of good quality, imposing a 10% penalty to a thief's attempts to open it. Then Bollenbach flees through the secret tunnel, leaving most of his belongings behind. All he takes are his precious research notes and the 10,000 gp he always carries in case he must set up shop elsewhere. (He also carts along his unconscious body, should that be necessary.)

The heroes enter to discover a bare room containing a cot, a chest, and a wardrobe. A single lamp hangs from a hook on the stone wall, providing a dim light. On the floor next to the cot lie an inkwell, quill, and a well-read copy of *Guide to the Created* by the famous scholar of the macabre, Rudolph van Richten. Every page has been marked with Bollenbach's inky scrawls, some amending van Richten's text, others contradicting it.

The wardrobe contains several sets of clothes as well as boots and shoes, all Bollenbach's. The chest contains a variety of anatomy books and other scientific texts, twenty volumes in all.

Secret Tunnel: A rough tunnel extends for a quarter mile and then opens on a riverbank. If the heroes follow the river in one direction, they end up back at the city. The other direction takes them into the wilderness. Emil Bollenbach has made good his escape.

Recurrence

If Bollenbach has escaped without his creation, he sets out for a new home where he can build another doppelganger golem. He seeks a distant city known as Paridon, home of the doppelgangers. He does not know its location, only that it lies upon an island. (If the heroes want to pursue Bollenbach, you can tell those who examine the annotated *Guide to the Created* that one of the pages has "Paridon . . . an island city teeming with stock from which to build my super-golem!" scrawled across it. For information on Paridon, see the entry for Zherisia in *Domains of Dread*.) Tracking and defeating him will pose quite a challenge.

On the other hand, if Bollenbach has escaped with his doppelganger golem in tow, the heroes eventually start hearing rumors of a shapeshifting creature that wanders the land. Seemingly benign, it destroys animated statues and other monstrosities.

At first, it may appear that Bollenbach's creation has benefited the land. However, the creature soon develops the ESP of real doppelgangers. As it destroys other golems, it comes to share their mindset. Specifically, it absorbs their hatreds for those who created them. The golem quickly learns to despise *all* artists and scientists, for they are the ones most likely to make golems. One by one, it begins to wipe out the Core's intellectual elite, whether they are real or imagined creators.

GESTALT

In him inexplicably mix'd appear'd
Much to be lov'd and hated, sought and fear'd.

—Lord Byron
Lara: Canto the First (1814)

BIOGRAPHY



Herein lies the story of a love triangle unnaturally simplified. Passionately sought by two men, Dr. Simone Couture was torn between them—until she found a way to make them *both* her perfect companion.

Appearance

Gestalt stands just over 6 feet tall, with a wiry, lanky frame and slightly disproportionate limbs. His layers of clothing, once stylish and expensive, are now worn and frayed. They hang off him limply and askew, lending him an odd appearance, much like a scarecrow. However, the ragged fashions do much to distract one's gaze from his horrifying visage. While each individual facial feature is pleasing, combined they form a scarred grotesquerie.



Gestalt's entire body bears patches of clammy, discolored skin where decay has set in. Recent surgeries intended to correct the problem have only added to the hideous patchwork of raised scars and livid flesh.

The rot has invaded Gestalt's lungs as well, causing him to breathe with a phlegm-choked wheeze. He never talks, but his feverish glare speaks volumes about the conflicting desires that burn within.

Gestalt

Flesh golem, Chaotic Neutral

Armor Class	6	Str	19
Movement	12	Dex	15
Level/Hit Dice	7	Con	10
Hit Points	35	Int	13
THACO	13	Wis	8
Morale	14*	Cha	4
No. of Attacks	2	XP	5,000
Damage/Attack	2d8/2d8		
Special Attacks	Strangulation; OL 17%; HS 26%; CW 60%		
Special Defenses	Regeneration; +1 or better magical weapon to hit; immune to mind- and life-affecting spells; +4 saving throw bonus against physical damage except from cold or electricity		
Special Vulnerabilities	Fear of <i>smokepowder</i> weapons, portraits of former life		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

- Morale is 19 (fearless) when defending Dr. Couture.

Construction

Gestalt is a flesh golem created by Dr. Simone Couture, who combined the best features of two slain suitors. She took her favorite eyes from one man, his skilled and strong hands, the more handsome face and thrilling body of his rival, and then continued to cut and stitch until she was satisfied. The skull of her creation now contains a single brain lobe from each man, joined together as one.

While Dr. Couture is a skilled physician, she is sadly flawed as a creator of golems. True, she did manage to animate a flesh golem assembled from just two bodies instead of the usual six (a feat van Richten had deemed virtually impossible). But instead of attracting some

dark soul from the beyond, the golem's body appears to imprison the shattered spirits of Couture's suitors.

Though Gestalt has yet to fully remember either past life, he is tormented by fractured recollections. These remnants have swirled together to create a blended personality. The golem follows the urges of one suitor, while using the skills of the other to reach his goals.

Also, although Dr. Couture made valiant attempts to stave off the onset of decay, she was not entirely successful. By the time the strike of a lightning bolt granted life to her creation, some of his flesh had degraded to a barely "usable" condition, and Gestalt is now battling the slow, inexorable advance of rot. This curbs the golem's stamina and may someday destroy him, but he has begun making attempts to extend his life (as those he bests in combat may grimly discover).

Gestalt shares a mental bond with Dr. Couture; at will, he can see through her eyes, and he uses this ability to keep an unending vigil over his creator. While he can sense her emotion, he cannot actually read Dr. Couture's thoughts, so he has yet to face the full and terrible knowledge of his past.

Zeitgeber: Gestalt is terrified of all *smokepowder* weapons, since they remind both halves of his mind of their sudden deaths. Thanks to these nightmarish memory flashes, Gestalt must make a fear check or flee whenever a *smokepowder* weapon is fired in his presence. If anyone so much as brandishes a firearm at him, the apprehension is obvious in his face, and he must succeed at a fear check to approach that person.

Though it is not a zeitgeber *per se*, Gestalt is sensitive to two small portraits in Dr. Couture's possession. Their images can speed him along the path of discovering his true nature and turn his devotion to Couture into hatred. See "Personality" for details.

Background

Several years ago, a man and a woman met while attending the Academe d'Richemulot, where both were students of medicine. After concluding their studies, the young doctors formed a business partnership and opened a clinic in the city of Mortigny.

The first of the pair was Dr. Simone Couture of Richemulot, a cool, aloof beauty with a quick tongue and a brilliant mind. Her partner was Dr. Alfons Temator of Borca. Although he matched Simone's skill as a surgeon, he could not equal her sense of style or social grace. Alfons spoke with a thick Borcan accent, looked unkempt, and generally made a poor first impression. Thus, he faded into the background while the "young lady doctor" gathered all the attention, but that was fine by the introverted Dr. Temator.

Dr. Couture considered their partnership purely professional. Privately, Dr. Temator hoped it would become much more. Driven by a secret, unrequited love for Simone, he had proposed opening the clinic simply so he could stay at her side. He thought he

wanted nothing more than her happiness, but he was blind to the fact that his devotion was slowly creeping toward a deep and dangerous obsession.

That obsession came to light when a rival entered the picture. Gaston, a local artist, began wooing the lovely Simone. The man was charming, eloquent, and seductive—everything Alfons was not. But many considered him a rogue and gigolo, and Alfons knew only he himself could offer Simone loyalty and love.

Alfons began shadowing Gaston and Simone as they toured Mortigny's nightlife. While watching the couple dine at a local café, he reached the boiling point. He simply could not accept that Simone had looked past someone who truly cared for her, only to fall for such an obviously shallow, womanizing cad.

Alfons stormed into the café and began loudly berating the shocked couple. His jealousy took Simone utterly by surprise, stunning her into silence. The Borcan surgeon aimed his fitful venom at Gaston, accusing the lothario of caring for nothing other than his own pleasure. Alfons declared to the café's shocked patrons that Gaston only took what he wanted from others; he would take and take and take, then discard the victims of his affections when he tired of them.

Gaston remained insufferably calm and composed. Smiling glibly, he playfully admitted that Alfons was probably right. He did take what he wanted from others. However, so did everyone, everywhere. And Alfons' real problem was that he had nothing Simone wanted.

Simone snickered, and Alfons' rage exploded. Unable to find the right words, Alfons forcefully slapped Gaston across the face. As Gaston laughed in stunned disbelief, Alfons declared the *cmepete chorosh*, the Borcan "death debt," and challenged Gaston to a duel the following dawn. Finally betraying his own irritation, Gaston warned Alfons that he was making a mistake. Alfons, still seething, would not back down.

In truth, Gaston was every bit the philanderer he was accused of being, but like a toddler with his toys, the mere fact that someone would dare so much to win Simone away from him made her endlessly more desirable. Sneering, Gaston accepted the challenge.

At the next dawn, the two men stood back-to-back in a courtyard, checking their pistols. Word spread quickly after the scene at the café, and a large crowd had gathered to witness the duel, Simone included. The two men paced. They spun. . . .

. . . Simone held her breath and watched the scene unfold, seemingly in slow motion. Until Alfons had stormed into the café, she had never suspected his true feelings. She had never even thought twice of him; he was merely her quiet, competent business partner. Her temperament was nearer to Gaston's; like the rake, she had merely been seeking some amusement in her life.

Yet now she had to admit that Alfons' utter devotion touched her deeply. She found it flattering that a man could so desire her that he would risk his own life for her hand. The more she thought about it, Alfons wasn't

so plain, really . . . he had piercing eyes, skilled hands . . . attractive features dampened by a lesser whole. She had come to the encouraging realization that she could be satisfied with the results of the duel, no matter which suitor won.

. . . And then the men fired. A moment later, they both crumpled to the cobblestones, mortally wounded. As the crowd gasped, Simone found herself robbed of both suitors. She burst into histrionics so great that her anguish would be the talk of Mortigny for weeks after.

Floating in a cloud of despair, Simone was permitted one final look at her suitors before their bodies were taken away. She gazed lovingly at Alfons' eyes . . . Gaston's smile . . . Alfons' hands . . . Gaston's shoulders . . . Alfons' devotion . . . Gaston's passion . . . and she realized that this needn't be the end.

Several days after the funerals, Simone stole her suitors' bodies from their respective graves and, toiling alone, secreted them back to the clinic. There, she began the long process of restoring some semblance of life to the men who had killed each other to have her. Selecting the best features from each man, she stitched their disparate parts into one wretched whole. To her, however, each part by itself remained worthy of coveting. Finally, Simone faced a difficult dilemma: Which mind would be rescued from the oblivion of death? Loyal Alfons, or the lusty and witty Gaston? She made her decision. She bisected both brains, took one lobe from each, and sutured them together. She then placed this new brain in her creation's skull, hoping against hope that somehow the minds of both suitors could be saved. What she in fact created was a new and uniquely demented personality.

Weeks after the duel, during one of Richemulot's frequent summer storms, Simone gave life to her creation. Her passionate desire for success might have been enough, but she could not rely on it; instead, she chose the fiery shock of lightning. Her reanimated suitors jerked back to life in a single body, their scrambled memories and desires combined in a single mind. During the first few days, as Simone lovingly nursed the golem into its new existence, she realized that her creation was neither Gaston nor Alfons. Instead, she had created a hideous *gestalt*, a bizarre mixture of the two rivals. The new creature, confused and only dimly aware of its heritage, latched on to this word as it was murmured softly by its creator. Gaston and Alfons were no more. In their place stood only Gestalt.

Personality

Gestalt is a young golem, still at the "confusion" stage of its mental development. Fragments of the memories, passions, and skills of both Gaston and Alfons live on within the creature. Thanks to a prevailing piece of Alfons' personality, Gestalt is obsessively protective and possessive of Simone. He spends his time skulking about the clinic or shadowing Simone around town,

longingly watching her from the shadows and "protecting" her from danger and sexual advances. While obeying Alfons' desires, Gestalt often calls upon Gaston's roguish skills, sneaking about and climbing walls. Gaston's personality survives in the golem's ruthless willingness to take what he needs from others—including a piece of their flesh. Thanks to a remnant of Alfons' surgical skill, he can use that flesh to replace parts of his own rotting body.

Simone has two small portraits in her possession, depicting the suitors who became Gestalt. If anyone shows these portraits to the golem, he appears confused and troubled. If they subsequently remind him of his former existence, shockingly clear memories suddenly boil to the surface. If Gestalt becomes aware of his true past, he will progress to the "betrayal" stage of psychological growth. His obsessive protection of Dr. Couture will sour into an unspeakable hatred, and his alignment will shift to chaotic evil.

As for Dr. Couture, she is now as conflicted as her creation. She both "loves" and despises Gestalt. She admires his strength and craves his slavish devotion, and despite herself, she is strangely thrilled by his obsessive and passionate attitude. Yet she also fears and abhors him, for he is beyond her complete control. Often, she tries to push the creature from her thoughts. But she does not wish to see him destroyed, and will protect him from harm, for she hopes that one day he might become the man she believes he can be. She knows he has killed, but she views such acts coolly; after all, if the golem has eliminated a few cutthroats, then he has done the city a service.

Combat

Those who come between Simone and Gestalt face a torturous fate. At the first opportunity, Gestalt attacks the unwitting gent and drags the flailing victim through Mortigny's alleys and across its rooftops, all the way back to the clinic. Here, in the room where Gestalt was born, the golem extends his life by using Alfons' surgical skill to replace sections of his own impure flesh with a fresh harvest taken from his victims.

Despite his troublesome rot, Gestalt is as tough to kill as most flesh golems. Only weapons of +1 or greater enchantment can harm him. He is immune to all life- and mind-affecting spells and gains a +4 bonus to saves against physical damage with two exceptions: He gains no bonus against cold or electricity.

He also remains strong, with powerful fists that inflict 2d8 points of damage each. If he successfully strikes a target with both fists in a single round, he can start strangling them in the next round, automatically causing 3d8 points of damage each round thereafter. However, since Gestalt prefers to seize a single male and take him alive, he rarely uses his crushing grip in this way. Instead, he merely clamps a viselike hand on his victim (often covering his mouth) and starts hauling

him back to the clinic, oblivious to any struggle. A single victim must have a Strength of 19 to break Gestalt's grip; two people working together can break the grip if each has a score of 17 or better.

The decay that besieges Gestalt does cause one disadvantage in combat: His endurance is limited. If he exerts himself for a full turn, he must rest for a round, taking no action, before he can resume activity.

Gestalt pushes his body to its very limits, however, throwing himself across wide alleyways or dropping from rooftops to reach his goals. The results are far from graceful, but such abuse causes him no loss of hit points, and by traveling from rooftop to rooftop the golem can cross the city quicker than anyone chasing him through the winding streets.

Thanks to his unnatural metabolism, Gestalt regenerates 1 hit point an hour. If the golem is reduced to 0 hit points, however, he falls lifeless and ceases to regenerate. Unfortunately for the naïve, he is not truly "dead." Unless his body is completely consumed by fire or acid, he can be revived anytime in the future. A mere bolt of electricity restores his life.

Dr. Couture is by no means a skilled combatant, but she may be called upon either to defend Gestalt or to defend herself *from* him. Although she avoids combat whenever possible, she still possesses the dueling pistols that ended the lives of her suitors. She knows a pistol can make Gestalt keep a proper distance (see "Construction"), and she always carries one on her person. In fact, she sleeps with one beneath her pillow, lest her fevered dreams summon him to her bedside, where Gestalt's confusion and obsession might lead to real danger.

Dr. Simone Couture, female human 0-level: AC 10; MV 12; hp 4; THACO 20; #AT 1 (wheellock belt pistol); Dmg 1d8 (if an 8 is rolled, roll again and add the result); SZ M; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 10, Cha 14; AL N; XP 35.

BEST OF BOTH WORLDS



his adventure takes place in Mortigny, a city in Richemulot, but with a few changes it could be moved to any large city. The story is designed for four to six characters of levels 2 to 4. While magical weapons will

help the party, heroes who lack them can still do well if they rely on their wits. At least one hero must be male; he will become the target of Gestalt's jealous wrath.

Adventure Setup

The adventure begins about four months after the fatal duel. In an extended campaign, you can enhance the story by arranging for the heroes to share a "history"

with Gestalt; perhaps they were present at the incident in the café, or watched the duel four months earlier. Even if the heroes did not witness these events, however, they can still learn about them during the course of the adventure.

Over the last two months, authorities have fished the bodies of eight men from the Musarde River. All the men exhibited signs of a brutal death, and chunks of muscle had been carved from their bodies. The mutilation showed no pattern, save that no two victims lacked the same piece of flesh. Until recently, each dead man came from the lower class, and since most were ruffians and rogues, the city did not mourn their passing. In contrast, the latest victim represents a startling change. He was Jules Haurie, from a prominent local family. When the crushed and torn remains of Haurie's young body floated up in the Musarde last week, the city finally took notice. Now even gentlewomen worry about their men, for no one knows who the killer might claim next.

To date, only Dr. Couture and Gestalt know the connection between the victims. All had come too close to Simone, in Gestalt's opinion. Whether they made a threat or made a pass did not matter to the golem; either way, the men found themselves strapped to a table in his abattoir, facing a horrific surgery and ultimately death.

Unbeknownst to the common folk, Jules Haurie was a wererat. Whether he lunged at or lusted after Dr. Couture may remain a mystery, but this much is certain: he picked the wrong woman to cross, and not even the Gift could save him from Gestalt's fury.

The Adventure Begins

The leaves are turning in Mortigny, so the heroes may be in town to enjoy the many autumn parties. Posters have been pasted up throughout the city. They offer a generous reward (cater to the greed of the party; 200 gp per hero would be a good start) to whomsoever brings in the killer of Jules Haurie, dead or alive. The posters also direct interested parties to the Haurie estate for further details.

The Haurie Estate

Like more than half the buildings in Mortigny, a good portion of the sprawling Haurie estate looks abandoned and decrepit. The rest is barely surviving.

Servants bring the heroes before Charlotte Isabelle Haurie, Jules' twin sister and the young socialite offering the reward. The twins have a nefarious aunt, Jacqueline Renier, but Richemulot's wererat lord plays no role in this adventure. A wererat herself, Charlotte is petite, with mousy brown hair and narrow features. Her brother's murder has left her outraged as well as saddened. In his memory, she wears a black sash over her party gown.

GESTALT

For the heroes' benefit, Charlotte explains that a murderer is stalking Mortigny; she details the past crimes as best she can. Unfortunately, she can offer few details about her brother's death. She surmises that he was probably "slumming" in the city's seedier taverns, and reluctantly admits he had a taste for "low women." By no means does she reveal his true nature, or suggest he was probably looking to do a little killing himself.

If the heroes press for more money, Charlotte will haggle, and may ultimately boost her offer to 400 gp apiece. Money is no object when it comes to her family's vengeance. While the wererats normally would hunt down someone who dared oppose them, none of the Hauries is keen on hunting a killer who can tear a lycanthrope apart with his bare hands. In fact, they fear it might be another wererat, and trust no one close.

On Patrol

After meeting with Charlotte and finalizing the deal, the heroes can start the hunt in earnest. If the heroes ask around, the locals can provide basic information that Charlotte missed: All of the attacks took place at night (Gestalt knows better than to reveal himself in broad daylight). And all of the victims were probably attacked in the western half of the city, the poorer part of town. (This is also where the clinic is located and where Simone spends most of her time.) Unfortunately, the killer otherwise follows no pattern, so the heroes would do best to patrol the streets after dark.

During one of their evening patrols, an attractive, professional-looking woman passes the heroes on the street, carrying a large leather bag. This is in fact Dr. Couture, returning to the clinic after visiting a patient. Just when Dr. Couture passes out of sight (or at any time if the heroes have hidden themselves), a gutter-snipe rushes her from an alley, snatches Dr. Couture's bag from her hand, and takes off down the street, leaving the lady stammering for help.

If the heroes pursue this criminal, he offers them a merry chase, but the heroes can stay on his trail if they try. Hoping to shake the heroes, the fleeing snatch-thief eventually ducks into an alley between two crumbling, abandoned buildings, and is trapped in a dead end.

The party can easily move in on the thief, who calls out to them obsequiously, making sniveling attempts to purchase his freedom. Unfortunately, he has no idea that a greater foe has trailed him as well. As the heroes get close, read or paraphrase the following:

The thief's heavy panting echoes off the cavernous walls of the alley. He pauses to catch his breath, yet the sound continues. It is a slow, ragged wheezing, coming from overhead, and not from the thief at all.

Suddenly, a black shape looms against the murky sky, and an immense figure leaps down from the high

rooftops into the darkened alley. It resembles a black scarecrow, yet it's incredibly swift, landing between you and the thief. In no more than a blink, it stands over the cutpurse, who begins shrieking in terror. The thief's bag drops to the ground, abandoned, and the strange figure clamps a steely hand on the man's throat. Only just begun, the thief's scream becomes a quiet gurgle, fading behind the sound of the creature's own ragged wheezing, which echoes through the alley once more.

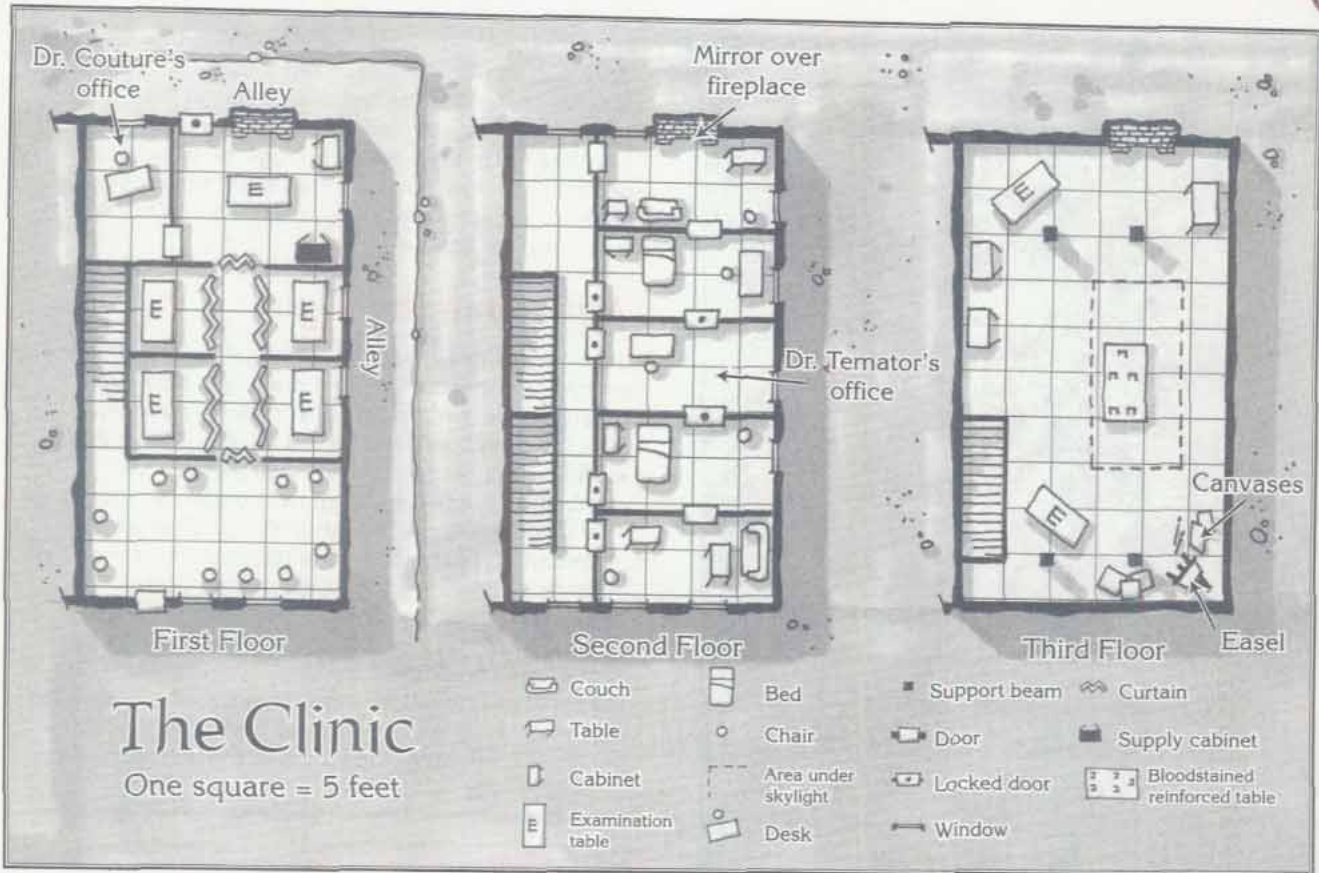
Gestalt ignores the heroes and drags the choking thief to one of the alley walls, not even bothering to throw the adventurers a stray glance. Unless the heroes act immediately, Gestalt will start scaling the cracked, crumbling stone wall. If the heroes continue to do nothing, in another round Gestalt reaches the rooftops, his flailing cargo in tow.

If the heroes immediately attack this interloper, Gestalt pauses just long enough to throw them a chilling glare; the heroes can catch a glimpse of his hateful, patchwork face, a sight easily worth a horror check. However, Gestalt will not stay to fight the party, and you should ensure that he escapes this encounter. A thief hero can climb up the alley walls in pursuit (with a +20% bonus to his Climb Walls roll), but will quickly lose Gestalt as the golem regularly and recklessly throws himself and his captive across 15-foot gaps while traveling from roof to roof.

The abandoned bag obviously belongs to a doctor, judging by the herbs and equipment within. Intriguingly, it also contains an unloaded wheellock belt pistol. (Simone uses it to keep Gestalt at arm's length, and for that purpose she has no need for bullets.) The bag's monogram bears the initials "S.C." However, unless the heroes left someone behind to keep an eye on the "damsel in distress," they discover that, like the monstrous vigilante, she too has disappeared into the night.

Another encounter is possible, however. If the heroes look around, they may spy a young woman named Selia darting into a doorway. She's a lady of ill repute, and this is not the first time she has seen the "freak" that leaps from the rooftops. She's quite fearful, but if the heroes grace her palm with silver, she may tell them about the attacker. She has even seen him dump a body into the river at night. Ironically, Selia knows and likes Dr. Couture, having visited her clinic after a beating. She does not connect the doctor with the freak, and in this case, she did not see the thief take the bag, so she does not know of Dr. Couture's involvement.

If Gestalt has escaped with the cutpurse, the next morning another body is found floating in the Musarde. The thief's throat has been crushed, and a large section of muscle has been cut away from his right side. The heroes should have no doubt that they have encountered Mortigny's mysterious killer.



House Calls

The heroes may have some idea what they're up against, but the enigmatic doctor is still their strongest lead. Armed with Dr. Couture's description and initials, the heroes can learn the identity of "the lady doctor" quickly and easily, but the first thing most locals think of when they think of poor Dr. Couture is the terrible tragedy that befell her during the past summer. If the heroes did not see the quarrel or duel personally, locals can vividly retell the tale.

Once the heroes learn Dr. Couture's identity, they can proceed to the clinic. It occupies half a three-story building that looks ready to fall down in a stiff wind. Since most of the patients can't read, the sign on the clinic's door has no words, only a caduceus.

The clinic occupies the first floor of the building (Couture and Gestalt live above). During the day, 1d4 people are present, either waiting to see the doctor or being treated for minor injuries and ailments. Since her partner's death, Couture frequently calls upon a nurse for help, but the middle-aged woman is rather slow-witted and can't even fathom such a thing as golems. She's a gossip though, so you can string this encounter along if you'd like, perhaps with talk of Couture's tragic suitors, and a hint that the good doctor may not be spending all her nights alone anymore. (A mussed bed, a nervous greeting from her employer in the morning,

sounds in the night . . . Who knows what "telltale" signs of passion this woman has seen or imagined?). The nurse is quite friendly. She is eager to peek beneath any bandages the heroes might have, and equally willing to apply whatever salve they might require.

Dr. Couture does everything in her power to keep the clinic sanitary. However, in Richemulot one simply cannot keep out the rats. Heroes may be a bit disturbed to spot the rodent traps near the large, locked metal box in which Simone stores her medical supplies.

The second floor houses two separate apartments. Dr. Temator once occupied the first, but now it lies vacant. Gestalt avoids this dusty apartment because its rooms present him with disjointed, unpleasant memories. Simone's apartment is comfortably furnished. A large mirror hangs over the fireplace in her bedroom, and upon the mantelpiece below rests an antique "memory box." The oak box contains Simone's small portraits of Alfons and Gaston, as well as the second wheellock pistol and enough *smokepowder* and bullets for six shots.

Gestalt lives in the attic loft above. Simone converted this level to a surgery when she created Gestalt, and it has been his home ever since. Surgical tables and sundry equipment are scattered about the room, and heavy wires run from a lightning rod on the roof, down through a large skylight, to a bloodstained, reinforced table bearing heavy leather straps. Simone



may be hard-pressed to explain why some of the blood on the operating table is still tacky. An easel stands in one corner, and under a nearby tarp lie a number of paintings rendered by Gestalt since his rebirth. While Gaston was a talented painter, these canvases are all covered in deranged, childlike scrawls, all finger-painted with a thick red pigment.

The layout of the other half of the building creates a mirror image in terms of layout. For years, however, no one but the rats and assorted vermin have lived here. Holes open the attic roof to the sky, and cobwebs hang like drapes from the ceilings.

The heroes may already suspect that Simone is somehow linked to the wheezing freak; they may even suspect the true nature of their relationship. If the heroes have come here to make accusations, Simone naturally denies everything and refuses to let the heroes search the building. Of course, there is not much she can do to stop them if they go ahead anyway. Although the heroes can find evidence that something here is not right (especially if they search the attic), they do not find Gestalt, and Simone does her best to explain everything else away.

Gestalt rarely strays very far from his creator, however. And though he maneuvers as necessary to avoid the heroes, he may create a diversion, such as a sound on the roof, to try and draw them away from his

lair. Moreover, he can sense everything that the heroes do in Simone's presence. Even if they don't threaten Simone, he can sense her discomfort in their presence. This, coupled with the heroes' possible interference in the alley, is enough to make Gestalt decide they pose a danger that must be removed. Only one question remains in Gestalt's mind: Which hero must go first?

A Bump in the Night

If the heroes don't leave Dr. Couture's place of their own accord, she eventually summons a gendarme (or several) to escort the heroes out. Her reputation remains sound, so if the heroes have no irrefutable evidence against her, the law sees them as the criminals. If the heroes harm Dr. Couture at this point, they risk powers checks. After visiting Couture, the heroes will probably retreat to plan their next move, and perhaps decide to simply stake out the clinic.

The next time a male hero is left alone, Gestalt comes to call. Ideally, this will be the night after the heroes have confronted Simone, when at least some of the party has retired for the evening. Pick a male hero who is currently alone, separate his player, and paraphrase the following, tailoring it to the hero's situation:



A disturbance rouses you from your dreams. As you groggily peer around the darkened room, you realize what woke you: a window is open, and the breeze billowing the curtains sounds like strange, steady breathing. No, not breathing . . . more like a rasping wheeze . . .



The instant the player realizes what this means, Gestalt lunges from the shadows, clamping an ether-soaked rag over the hero's face. The hero must make a save vs. breath weapon or pass out. If the hero's save is successful, he is slowed (as if by the spell) and must continue making a successful save each round the rag is pressed over his face. As soon as the hero succumbs to the fumes, Gestalt carts him away.

The victim will certainly make a ruckus as he struggles to break Gestalt's grip. It's also possible that the heroes won't give Gestalt an opportunity to get one of them alone. In either case, the heroes should know the creature has stolen their compatriot moments after the fact. By now, they certainly also know what grisly fate is in store for their ally if they don't act quickly.

Cut to the Chase

When the kidnapped hero regains consciousness, he finds himself in the abattoir Gestalt calls home, with one

of his arms being prepped for surgery. For maximum effect, make sure you single out the hero's good arm.

Keeping the player alone, read the following text. *Don't read it all at once, however.* Rather, space out the description, giving the player a chance to ask a few questions. If the hero has carefully examined this area, he may recognize a few details. In any case, try to time your reading so the last paragraph ends just as the other heroes burst into the room (presumably, they're on their way).

Your head aches and your senses are dull, but slowly they reveal the surrounding chamber, which is dim and vast. It smells of old wood and dust, and of something sickly sweet like decaying meat. A sour, dry rag fills your mouth, held in place by a narrow cloth that cuts hard across your jaw. You are prone and strapped to an immense table. One arm is cold and bare, stretched away from your flank and firmly bound. Someone—or something—is wheezing painfully while moving about the room behind you, out of sight. Directly above, a skylight lies open to the night sky. A rat skitters over your chest and moves slowly downward toward your legs. . . .

. . . The stranger suddenly steps into view, brushing away the rodent. He is an immense and freakish thing, not quite a man, with a patchwork face crossed by red, ropy scars. Noisily, he sets a tray of medical tools beside you. You can barely make out the instruments: scalpels coated in dried blood, large sewing needles, heavy thread. The creature moves in briefly to gaze at your face, wheezing heavily. A spot of phlegm hangs from his lip, and his eyes are dark and intense. He wears the same tattered greatcoat as in the alley, but he has added a ratty surgical smock. . . .

. . . The wheezing thing rolls up his sleeve, revealing a scarred arm, circled at the wrist by ragged seams and crude stitches. A patch of decaying flesh covers the forearm. Reaching into a small jar, the creature dabs thick red pigment onto its fingers. Slowly, it begins to paint an outline around the corrupted tissue. When it has finished, it rests its arm on the table, lining it up with yours. Now it starts painting an outline on your arm exactly identical to the first. . . .

. . . Carefully and calmly, the creature picks up a scalpel and starts carving its own rotted muscle, inch by inch. Only a faint trickle of fluid emerges, watery and gray. Finally, it has sliced out the dead flesh. And now, it presses the scalpel to your arm. . . .

This might be a good time for a horror check. Meanwhile, the rest of the heroes must hurry to the clinic if they want to save their friend before he gets used for spare parts. By the time the heroes reach the

second floor, however, Simone is ready for them. Read the following as the heroes rush up the stairs:

Dr. Couture stands on the landing with her feet planted shoulder width apart. She is swaying slightly and has a crazed glint in her teary eyes. With one hand, she clutches an oaken box to her bosom, and with the other, she wildly brandishes a pistol.

"Please," she begs, with tears streaming down her face. "Stop where you are. You do not understand. He needs this! You cannot interrupt him! I cannot lose him again. I cannot lose them twice!"

Simone hopes to keep the heroes at bay until Gestalt can finish upstairs. She fires at the first hero to take an offensive action, but after that she poses little threat, and quickly collapses in a sobbing heap. If they choose to, the heroes can even pry the "memory box" (and the two portraits within) from her hand without resistance.

Once past Simone, the heroes can rush to their friend's rescue. Ideally, they should burst into the attic just as Gestalt is making his first cut in the hero's arm (causing only 1d2 points of damage). Gestalt immediately turns his attention toward this sudden threat, and determines to destroy every last one of the heroes if need be. By this point, the bound hero is completely free of the ether's effects, and he can participate in the battle if an ally takes a round to free him.

If the battle turns against Gestalt, he'll try to flee out the skylight, making his escape across the rooftops.

Recurrence

If Gestalt has escaped, he won't stray far from Simone, and he won't forget the heroes' actions. As long as the heroes remain in Mortigny, they'll have to sleep with one eye open.

Other possibilities abound. If Gestalt has been "killed" but not destroyed, and the increasingly distraught Simone yet lives, she may try to resurrect her wretched companion during the next thunderstorm. Alternately, if Gestalt has escaped but Couture is dead, the golem may pick another damsel to protect and gradually develop a mental bond with her.

Lastly, if the heroes use the portraits to alert Gestalt of his true past, he immediately ceases his attacks, glaring at the paintings and quivering with rage. Finally, the golem growls out his first word, filling it with as much bile as it can contain: "Sssimone . . ." Gestalt then rushes into the night, howling like a wild beast. Soon after, Dr. Couture may seek the heroes' protection, for a vengeful Gestalt would hound her without mercy.

LIVING ARMOR

*Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood,
Disguise fair nature with hard-favor'd rage;
Then lend the eye a terrible aspect.*

—William Shakespeare
Henry V

BIOGRAPHY



The need for recognition can drive even the sanest man to extreme measures. To prove his worth, Janos created a suit of living armor in the shape of a fearsome beast—a beholder. Little did he realize that his creation would destroy what he sought to acquire.

Appearance

At first glance, one might easily mistake this creation for a beholder: It's a large, levitating orb with an enormous central eye. Ten appendages sprout from its hairless hide like tentacles, each one ending in yet another eyeball. The likeness is flawed, however, for its hapless creator had yet to see a true beholder when he



Living Armor

started his work. With only a rough sketch to go by, he fashioned this monstrosity from both human and animal parts, making it disproportionate and clumsy. The eyes adorning the long stalks came from oxen and horses. The central body hails from a small elephant, and the central eye once belonged to a giant squid. The large teeth in its wide mouth were taken from several wolves and a black bear.

Living Armor

Flesh Golem, Chaotic Evil

Armor Class	-5/-3/2	Str	19
Movement	FL 12 (B)	Dex	12
Hit Dice	20	Con	18
Hit Points	135	Int	13
THACO	0	Wis	6
Morale	Unsteady (5)	Cha	4
No. of Attacks	1 (bite)	XP	36,000
Damage/Attack	3d10		
Special Attacks	Eyestalks		
Special Defenses	Anti-magic ray, +1 or better magical weapon to hit		
Special Vulnerabilities	-6 on saves against magical attacks on the mind		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

Construction

The wizard Janos imported a small elephant from Sri Raji and used its torso as the foundation of his golem (actually, he was building a suit of living armor, but things did not go quite as planned). He gutted the elephant so he could climb into the center of his creation. Then he carved a large mouth in the hide, and lined it with wolf and bear teeth to form a fearsome grin. Above the mouth, Janos inserted the eye of a giant squid. Next, he ringed the top of the creature with ten eyestalks, each one fashioned from the flesh of a horse, ox, or cow. Then he finished off each stalk with an equine or bovine eye.

Each of the golem's eyes, including the one in the center, has been enchanted with the ability to cast a particular magic spell. The golem and Janos are linked telepathically, so not only can he see out of its eyes while inside it, but he can also activate its magical attacks. Unfortunately, he cannot stop the golem from attacking on its own; the golem's will reigns supreme.

Zeitgeber: While it does not have a zeitgeber in the traditional sense, this golem does suffer from a peculiar weakness. It is highly insecure. Its creator built it out of desperate need to prove himself to others. The golem absorbed his fixation. As a result, the creature suffers a -6 penalty against any magical or psionic affront that affects the mind, and it has an extremely low morale rating. This insecurity is heightened by the fact that Janos has never acknowledged the creature as an individual, referring to it simply as his "Living Armor."

Background

The wizard Janos belonged to a group of adventurers who called themselves "Edvard's Five," honoring the paladin who led them. In spite of his good alignment, the wizard was extremely arrogant, and "Janos's Five" would have suited him better. As his powers expanded, so did Janos's inflated ego. The group liked Janos, but their tolerance for him bordered on condescension. Despite their troubles, the party managed to stay together.

Then the inevitable happened: A hero died. Dargon, the group's priest, perished in a bloody battle with a werewolf in Verbrek. Karla, a half-elf priestess of Ezra, joined them as they were traveling. Janos welcomed her; in fact, he was immediately smitten. He felt a desperate need to gain the respect he felt he deserved to prove his worth to Karla. After a particularly bitter argument with the rest of the party, Janos tried to convince Karla that the two of them should split from the group and form a new adventuring band. Even though Karla also harbored a secret admiration for Janos, she refused the plan. In a huff, Janos left the group. He returned home to a remote tower tucked in the woods, about a mile from a small town.

To prove that he did not need the other party members, and indeed could do anything that the rest of them could do, Janos began research on a suit of "Living Armor." In his studies, he discovered a sketch of a strange creature with the name "beholder" scrawled underneath it. The description of the beast's vast magical powers was exactly what he had been seeking, so he decided to form his armor in that image.

After determining the steps necessary to create his masterpiece, Janos set about purchasing the animals from which he could harvest body parts. He bought some of his supplies from local farmers and hunters, but two creatures, the elephant and the squid, were procured from afar. Janos took great pains to keep his work secret.

The final component his experiment demanded left Janos at a loss. He needed the brain of a loyal, cherished pet. He had no pets himself. And despite his desperation, he did not wish to kill someone's faithful companion. At the last minute, he decided to substitute the bear brain already in his possession.

Upon activating his Living Armor, Janos crawled inside and telepathically steered it through the field near his house, elated with the power he now controlled. He

began gloating to the creature, telling it how he would use it to prove to his former companions that he was right—that he really was more powerful than the entire party combined. His anger channeled through the telepathic link, causing the instincts of the bear's brain to take over. The golem broke free from its creator's control and began rampaging across the countryside, killing everyone in its path. Janos attempted to reassert control, but to no avail. His wild ride had begun.

The local town council summoned Edvard's Four (renamed after Janos's departure), begging for their help against the marauding monstrosity. No one realized who was behind it, or rather, *inside* it; in fact, they believed Janos might have become one of its victims. Janos's former comrades tracked the beast and moved in for the kill, but they were sorely out-matched. Janos lay helpless within, watching in horror as his creation slaughtered one old friend after another, until only Karla remained. Then the beast turned toward her. Janos desperately began assaulting the golem from the inside, struggling to thwart its aim. The ploy worked, and Karla escaped, horribly wounded and alone.

Personality

The golem is ruled both by the instincts of the animals that have contributed to its form and by the same insecurities that plague its creator. It resents being treated like a suit of armor and is determined to show Janos that it has a will of its own. If the correct brain had been used, the golem would have been easy for Janos to dominate, but the bear's brain has essentially taken over, making it virtually impossible to control.

Combat

The golem's combat strategies resemble those of a beholder, with a few exceptions. The creature's eyestalks have the following spells: *telekinesis*, *flesh to stone*, *disintegrate*, *death spell*, *fear*, *sleep*, *cause serious wounds*, *lightning bolt*, *cone of cold*, and *fireball*. The creature can use any four eyestalk attacks in one round, but no eyestalk can be activated two rounds in a row (they take one round to "recharge"). Typically, the golem fires the *anti-magic ray* from its central eye at anyone who looks like a wizard, and it targets the eyestalk attacks against everyone else.

All of the eyes have been enhanced so that they always *detect magic* and *detect invisibility*. The link allows Janos to see these things as well, giving him 360-degree vision as if wearing a *robe of eyes*.

The golem is intelligent enough, primarily by tapping Janos's experience as an adventurer, to focus on one opponent at once. It focuses its attacks against that foe, then switches to other opponents after the first is dead. Any eyes that cannot hit the target of choice and have other targets will take them, but the golem typically picks out the most dangerous-looking party member

LIVING ARMOR

and tries to finish that person off as quickly as possible. It is never so stupid as to fire its *anti-magic ray* and magical attacks all at the same person.

BEHIND THE BEHOLDER



In this brief but potentially deadly adventure, the heroes discover that a terrible beast has been terrorizing the inhabitants of a small town. Questioning the only surviving witness will lead them to Janos and his creation.

Because this adventure can take place in and around any settlement with a wizard's tower nearby, it has not been assigned to an established location. The text below refers to the town as "Rombia," but the name is provided solely for color. You won't find it on any map.

If the characters have no defense against *flesh to stone*, *disintegrate*, and the *death spell*, or do not at least have very good saving throws against these attacks, the final battle could be tough. It is designed for a group of heroes over 10th level, though a lower-level party could handle it if they were able to learn of the golem's vulnerability and discover how to take advantage of it.

Adventure Setup

It has been several days since the golem went berserk, but only a matter of hours since the battle between the creature and Edvard's Four. That encounter left the golem with only 97 hit points. Karla barely escaped with her life, though one of her arms was completely disintegrated. For the past few days, Janos has been trapped inside the golem with no food or water. The golem is lazily circling the area around Janos's tower. The wizard has tried to force his way out of the creature, but without a magical weapon, he cannot harm it.

Karla, half-elf female P12 of Ezra; AC 1 (+1 *platemail*, shield, Dex +2); MV 6; HD 12; hp 3 (61 normally); THACO 14 (13 w/*mace of disruption*); #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1; SA spells; SD spell immunities; SZ M; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 15, Wis 18 (19 w/*pearl of wisdom*), Cha 16; AL NG.

Special Equipment: +1 *plate mail*, *mace of disruption*, 2 doses of *incense of meditation*, *pearl of wisdom*.

Special Abilities: SD—Immune to *cause fear*, *charm person*, *command*, *friends*, and *hypnotism* spells.

Spells (9/7/7/4/2/2): 1st—*detect evil*, *command*, *detect magic*, *cure light wounds* (x3), *invisibility to undead*, *protection from evil*, *sanctuary*; 2nd—*hold person*, *find traps*, *augury*, *silence 15' radius*, *slow poison*, *aid*, *resist fire*; 3rd—*prayer*, *speak with dead*, *glyph of warding*, *cure disease*, *dispel magic* (x2), *remove curse*; 4th—*detect lie*, *cure serious wounds*, *neutralize poison*, *protection from evil 10' radius*; 5th—*plane shift*, *true seeing*; 6th—*blade barrier* (x2).

The Adventure Begins

While the heroes are traveling toward Rombia, they come across Karla, the newest—now *only*—member of Edvard's Four. She is lying unconscious by the side of the road. She has only 3 hit points remaining, and her left arm is missing. Even if the heroes heal her, she will still be in shock. If the heroes awaken her somehow, Karla will babble incoherently about the beholder golem: "Its eyes . . . Oh, goddess, please close its eyes . . ."

The Farmhouse

There is a small farmhouse nearby where the heroes can take Karla. If the heroes approach carrying the unconscious priest, the farmer and his wife (Josef and Lynn, both 0-level humans) come rushing out to help. They usher everyone into the house, directing them to place Karla on their own bed. If none of the heroes has any healing abilities, the farmer immediately sends one of his sons into town for the doctor. Meanwhile, Lynn sets about cleaning Karla's wounds.

If the heroes talk to Josef or Lynn, they learn about the horrible beast roaming the countryside. The couple does not know anything about Janos or his creation, but they do know that some creature has killed at least five townspeople in the last three days. They suspect that the injured young woman also met up with this beast, though they are amazed that she is still alive.

While the heroes wait for the doctor (or for Karla to come around), they see the following:



Through the front window, you catch sight of a small child running through the wheat field outside, her long brown hair flying behind her. Suddenly, what looks to be a large wolf leaps on her from behind, and the girl falls to the ground with a high-pitched shriek.



The tall wheat effectively conceals the two figures from sight after the girl falls. If the heroes rush outside to help, they hear her squealing excitedly. They arrive just in time to see the girl jump up and pounce on the shaggy wolf, and they both roll around on the ground playfully. When they notice the heroes, the girl, Janna, and the wolf, Scamp, stop and look at them warily. If the heroes are friendly, Janna immediately latches on to the one with the highest Charisma, holding his or her hand and walking back toward the house. If asked about her companion, she explains that her father found the baby wolf in the woods a couple of years ago; the pup was injured, but her father nursed him back to health. He has been a loyal companion to the family ever since. Scamp himself is friendly and playful.

It is important that the heroes meet and befriend Scamp, since his fate will soon lie in their hands.

Talking to Karla

Eventually, Karla will come around. Though she is still in shock and will need some time to recover, she can talk for a little while before wearing out. She thanks the heroes for saving her. If they ask what happened to her, she can give the following information:



"A terrible monster attacked us near our friend Janos's tower. The large, round creature had a large eye in the center of its body, and it floated above the ground. It immediately began shooting deadly magic from its eyestalks, overwhelming my companions. We fought valiantly, but we were no match for this unholy beast. It killed my friends, but when it turned toward me, it suddenly began shuddering and twisting, and the deadly beam struck my arm. I barely made it to the road before the pain and shock overcame me.

"Eduard's Five—I mean Four, the name taken by my adventuring group, was summoned by the town council soon after the creature made its presence known. We tracked the beast easily enough, but we grew increasingly concerned as its track led closer and closer to our former companion's home.

"During the attack, I could hear Janos screaming for help. He must have been injured or captured by the creature. I am in no shape to help him, but I beg you to do so. I will do everything in my power to repay you.

"My friend Janos is a powerful wizard. He left our group after a personal disagreement between the two of us. Ultimately, it's my fault that he's in danger."



Karla feels extremely guilty about Janos's separation from the party. If pressed, she will reveal the details of his departure, but it will leave her weeping and exhausted.

The Beholder

Karla can give the heroes a pretty good idea of the location of her encounter with the creature. When the heroes arrive, they see a barren clearing. After Karla escaped, the golem took out its frustrations by disintegrating everything in the area, including the bodies of Janos's former friends. From here, it is not hard to track the beast. It leaves a wide path of disintegrated foliage behind it.

If the heroes are not looking for the creature, they can still encounter it on their way to Janos's tower. It is circling his home, unable to get back through the closed door. When the heroes do encounter the creature, read or paraphrase the following:



The creature hovers above the ground, and it is just as Karla described it: a bloated orb almost as big as a small carriage, with a huge central eye. The flesh is gray and mottled, and a slimy film covers the big eye. The mouth is a grim, narrow slash filled with mismatched ivory stubs and startling fangs. An assortment of uneven leathery tentacles sprouts from the top of the orb, each one ending in another small, glistening sphere. Presumably these dark little spheres are eyes, and most of them are aimed at you.



As soon as the creature gets within melee range, the heroes hear muffled cries for help. Any hero who makes a successful Intelligence check deduces that the pleas are coming from within the creature itself!

Janos has been trapped inside the golem for days, so he is growing extremely weak. Thus, he cannot help the heroes if they battle the beast. In addition, for every 3 points of damage that the heroes inflict on the golem, Janos suffers 1 point, causing him to scream in pain every time they strike the creature: "No, stop! You are killing me too! Please, I beseech you. Help me escape!"

The creature will not stop attacking, but Janos will cast *project image* in order to talk to the heroes. Because he is exhausted, the spell lasts only 8 rounds. Janos can give the following information:



"The monster is my own creation, and now I am trapped inside this suit of living armor. Out of jealousy, I decided to prove to my former companions that I was worthier than any of them, but all I have proved is that I was more foolish. I cannot seem to control this beast, and its rampage is far more horrible than I ever dreamed. I must have skipped a step in the creation process or left out a vital component. I kept careful notes in my project journal, but I cannot get to it right now. Perhaps you can check the notes for me. . . ."



The beleaguered wizard begs the heroes to help him regain control of his armor, but they must hurry before it kills anyone else. At this point, the heroes have two obvious options:

- ❖ They can continue to battle the creature, perhaps destroying it, though this will inevitably kill Janos as well. This would definitely call for a powers check on the part of the heroes.
- ❖ They can enter his tower and check his notes to find out how to regain control of the beast.

LIVING ARMOR

Janos, human male, M15: AC 1 (w/+3 leather armor and 19 Dex); MV 12; hp 41; THACO 16 (12 w/+2 throwing knives (x2) and Dex); #AT 1 (staff) or 2 (daggers); Dmg 1d6 or 1d3+3/1d3+3; SA spells; Str 14, Dex 17, Con 9, Int 15, Wis 11, Cha 10; SZ M (5'10"); AL CN.

Spells (5/5/5/5/2/1): 1st—alarm, burning hands*, change self, charm person, comprehend languages, detect magic*, detect undead, feather fall, identify, jump, light, magic missile*, read magic, sleep*, spider climb, Tenser's floating disc, wizard mark; 2nd—blindness*, continual light, detect invisibility*, fog cloud, forget, invisibility*, locate object, magic mouth, Melf's acid arrow, shatter, stinking cloud, Tasha's uncontrollable hideous laughter, web*; 3rd—delude, dispel magic, explosive runes, feign death, fireball*, fly, hold person*, lightning bolt*, slow, tongues*, water breathing; 4th—confusion*, emotion, Evard's black tentacles, fear, fire trap, ice storm*, improved invisibility*, magic mirror, minor globe of invulnerability, wall of fire; 5th—animate dead, cone of cold, feeblemind, hold monster, magic jar, stone shape, telekinesis*, teleport, transmute rock to mud*, wall of iron*; 6th—chain lightning, death spell, disintegrate, mass suggestion, project image*, stone to flesh, true seeing; 7th—control undead, finger of death, mass invisibility, reverse gravity, vision. *indicates memorized spells that have not already been cast that day.

Janos's Tower

Janos's home is a square tower out in the woods, at least a mile from the nearest house or homestead. The windows are all shut tightly, and the door is closed but not barred or locked. Once they get past the golem, the heroes can easily enter the tower and search it.

The tower has three levels. A large room dominates the ground floor. Guest quarters and storage rooms comprise the second story. On the third story lies the Janos's private quarters, another guestroom, a sitting room, and a library.

Actually, the tower does have another level—below ground. The receiving room floor on the main level has an intricately painted pattern. It conceals the hinges and seams of a large trapdoor, which heads down to Janos's laboratory. Here, the heroes can discover the horror chamber where the golem was constructed. A small door in the back of the room leads to a meat locker, recently dug. It holds the body parts from the countless animals that Janos used in his creation.

The room also contains many books and scrolls, most of them ordered neatly on the shelves along the walls. The few books scattered on the workbench include Janos's spellbook (complete with spells up through 7th level but protected with *explosive runes*), several treatises on animal physiology, and his journal.

If the heroes read the project journal, it explains much of Janos's story from his point of view. His research is methodical; it would take days to read it all. One of the last entries, however, has a checklist of components. When the heroes find it, read aloud the following:

All but one of the entries has been checked off. This one lists "the brain of a loyal pet, companion, or follower." Next to the entry, Janos had scrawled, "After some reflection, I am not sure that this is necessary for someone with my mental fortitude. Rather than perform this ghastly deed, I will simply use the brain of the bear, which contributed the large front teeth."

At this point, the heroes have several options:

- They can go back and try to kill the golem—and kill Janos as well.
- They can locate an appropriate brain for the golem. Before they do this, they may try to face the golem and talk to Janos. He will have to yell from his prison. When his mistake is pointed out, he recognizes the problem immediately. He tells the heroes that if they obtain a proper brain for his construct, he can install it and regain control of the beast. Until he has the proper parts, however, he dares not take out the existing brain, for his construct may simply become a mindless killing machine with no connection to him or his tower.

The Brain

Locating an appropriate brain will be difficult because it brings a moral dilemma. Should they kill Scamp or another loyal animal to stop this creature? After all, they could just try to kill the creature itself, but then they would also be killing Janos.

The heroes may come up with another solution. For instance, they may *charm* a wild animal and then kill it, taking its brain to Janos. If they do this, it will allow Janos to reassert control, but only for 1 turn (though he will not know this). At that point, the golem will again go into a rage, attacking everyone in sight.

Once the heroes locate a brain, they can take it to Janos. However, getting it to him might be a bit of a problem, since he remains trapped in the belly of the beast. The heroes will have to find a way to transport the brain to him, perhaps through magic, perhaps by simply forcing it through the creature's partially open mouth. Whichever way they do it, Janos can attach the new brain and reassert control. Then, he can make the golem open its mouth and let him out.

Recurrence

In all likelihood, our little tale will end like this: The heroes will find a way to help Janos regain control of his creation, and allow the golem to stay pretty much intact. If that is the case, Janos keeps his Living Armor, since it is now completely under his control . . . or is it?

"Oh, but he was a tightfisted hand at the grindstone ... a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous old sinner! ... secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster."

—Charles Dickens
A Christmas Carol

BIOGRAPHY



It is said that evil begets nothing but evil. If this is so, can anyone doubt that a creature brought to life as the embodiment of covetousness and avarice would eventually find itself embroiled in more vicious and brutal sins?

Lucre

Coin Golem, Neutral Evil

Armor Class	3	Str	18
Movement	12	Dex	18
Level/Hit Dice	18	Con	20
Hit Points	80	Int	14
THACO	3	Wis	9
Morale	20 (fearless)	Cha	7
No. of Attacks	1	XP	13,000
Damage/Attack	4d10		
Special Attacks	none		
Special Defenses	+2 or better magical weapon to hit; one-quarter damage from impaling weapons; immune to fire; special regeneration*; immune to fire spells; half damage from all other spells except electrical		
Special Vulnerabilities	Double damage from bludgeoning weapons		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

• Lucre heals by touching ordinary coins and adding them to his body. He regains 1 hp for every 50 gold coins claimed, until he reaches a maximum of 80 hp. Provided the coins are touching, he can control them at once; theoretically a pile of 4,000 could rise in a single round.

Appearance

Lucre usually takes the form of a decorative suit of armor made from thousands of gold coins. He grips a weapon—usually a long sword—that is also formed wholly from coins. When holding himself in uncanny stillness, he appears to be the kind of gaudy conversation piece that one might find in the home of a phenomenally rich person (which is exactly where the

heroes are most likely to encounter him). The armor is fully articulated and hollow. Curious sorts who poke or peer through the grate in the helmet find nothing but emptiness.

Construction

Lucre is a life force bound into thirteen specific gold coins. No country or domain lays claim to their markings. They were specially minted for a terrible miser named Ezekiel Barckarl, and they bear his hawk-nosed likeness on their heads. The coins' tails were struck with the image of a human heart and display the phrase *aureus est anima*.

Lucre can control and animate any gold coin that touches one of his original "host" pieces. He can move his life force between these host pieces virtually at will;



Lucre

see "Combat" for details. As soon as a single host piece touches a borrowed gold coin, his power courses through the borrowed coin as well, allowing him to draw still more coins into his midst. One by one, the collection grows, and Lucre can shape it into any form. Simply by placing a single coin of Ezekiel into a large enough pile of gold, Lucre could assume the shape of a giant, a troll, or even a gleaming gold dragon. He prefers to maintain himself in the form of a decorative suit of armor, however, shaping his body from thousands of coins. He moves fluidly and gracefully, for he can manipulate each individual coin in turn. If it pleases him, he can create a shimmering wave that ripples across his form, and he can even mimic expressions.

Lucre no longer shares any bond with his creator. The miser who would be his master hired the services of an artificer, who cast the coins by melting an intelligent weapon. Perhaps because Lucre already had a dark soul lurking within, he joined the ranks of the Created. His situation is unique. No one but the artificer who made him knows the original identity of this creature. And since the coin golem's first act was to kill the artificer, his secret is safe.

As for Barckarl, Lucre simply considers him the latest—and certainly not the greatest—in a long series of masters. At present, even Barckarl no longer holds him in check, for now the only master Lucre serves is money.

Background

Long ago, the being called Lucre led a much different life. He was a golden sword, and he possessed not only magical abilities, but also intelligence and a warrior's spirit. Eventually he came into the hands of Ezekiel Barckarl, as miserly a man as can be. Barckarl had no use for a mere sword, however. He wished to create a completely trustworthy guardian for his great hoard of treasure, and he paid an artificer to melt down the golden weapon and cast its molten flesh into thirteen coins, each one a potential vessel for the sword's intellect.

Lucre, as Barckarl called his new servant, could only focus his mind upon one coin at a time, but he could exert control over any ordinary coin he touched. The miser instructed Lucre to use that power to assume the form of a suit of armor, and gave him explicit instructions to kill anyone who dared to steal the miser's treasure.

Given his heritage, Lucre was well accustomed to protecting a mortal master's life and possessions. His spirit was no stranger to killing, but his effectiveness as a sword had depended on his master's skill at wielding him. Now, for the first time, he could perform without the handicap of an imperfect mortal hand. He had become both the weapon and the warrior.

His first duty was to slay a thief who had made off with a small portion of Barckarl's treasure. This thief

turned out to be the artificer who had fashioned Lucre (unbeknownst to the golem). The "crime" was staged; Barckarl arranged the killing to ensure no one would expose the secret of his guardian. After that, the miser commanded Lucre to remain motionless in the counting room, standing guard until someone, or something, posed a new threat to Barckarl's precious hoard.

One evening, a thief sneaked into the counting room. Lucre sprang from his display case and blocked the door. The man was dumbstruck with terror, and he barely managed to avoid the initial thrust of the golem's glittering sword of coins.

The golem was disappointed. The man's lack of skill was obvious, and after so much idle time, Lucre craved a battle that would last. Like a cat with a mouse, the golem first wounded the man's legs so that he wouldn't get away. Then he took delight in sadistically terrorizing the poor thief who soon just kneeled and admitted defeat. This outraged Lucre, who was not yet done playing. He found his magical voice, and in a rasping tone, he demanded to know why the thief would fight no more.

Astonished, the cowering thief related the tale of his own mysterious master who took a usurious loan from the miser. Barckarl kept raising the interest due so that the man would never pay his debt. The thief was sent to steal enough gold to close the account. He told Lucre, "I would sooner fall to your blade than return in disgrace."

Lucre obliged the man, running him through with his sword of coins. As the man gurgled his last breath, the golem pondered three facts that had come to light. He sensed they would change his unnatural life forever.

First, the golem had learned that in the world of flesh, one need not always live up to one's word. Both the statue's owner and Lucre's own master had entered into an agreement and then actively worked to undermine the deal.

The second concept Lucre came to understand was that one could get people to do things for you if you gave them gold. And gold, Lucre knew, was something he had in abundance.

Finally, as he reveled in dispatching the thief, Lucre realized that his body and soul existed for one reason alone: to kill. The fact that he was now a creature of coin rather than a finely honed weapon did nothing to change this fact. He was a killer, plain and simple, and he killed to protect his treasure. That was how Lucre came to think of Barckarl's hoard—as *his* personal treasure.

The golem stood in the counting room for many months pondering these concepts. He held no malice toward the old miser, but neither did he feel the loyalty he once had. He was faithful to the treasure and to the treasure alone; little else mattered.

Nonetheless, standing guard over that hoard could not satisfy Lucre very long. He felt the call of his lethal heart, begging for release. So one night, after Ezekiel Barckarl had gone to bed, Lucre donned a heavy cloak and went into a tavern in the seedier section of town.

Despite his peculiar appearance and strange, rasping voice, it took very little money or convincing to find a thief who would break into Barckarl's home. The next night, when the thief came calling, Lucre stood waiting. He had purposely chosen a man whose sword arm was stronger than his housebreaking skills, for the golem had wanted a worthy opponent in combat. The thief held his own for a time and offered more satisfaction than the last man the golem had fought. Still, the contest did not quell the fire in Lucre's soul.

A month later, the golem again donned the cloak and paid a man to come to call. Once again, it was the last thievery the unsuspecting "guest" ever attempted. Still not sated, the golem repeated the process several months in a row, always striving to gain a better opponent. In accordance with Barckarl's first instructions, he has carted out the bodies to dispose of them in alleys. (The miser prefers not to let the local police, much less a lowly undertaker, have any cause to glimpse his hoard.)

Ezekiel Barckarl recently began to wonder about the number of thieves who were attempting to steal his treasure. One night the old man heard Lucre leaving, and he followed him. When the miser realized what a terrible monster his own greed had created, he had a change of heart. He saw how his greed had led to nothing but grief and death, and what an awful blight it laid on his very soul. He vowed to give away his fortune the next day.

Lucre, however, would have none of it. He told Barckarl that if he touched even a single coin in the counting room, the miser's own guard would strike him down as mercilessly as he would any thief. That was but a short time ago. The old man still desperately wants to divest himself of his sinful riches, but he can think of no way to oppose Lucre. The golem, for his part, has no intention of ending his "hobby." Last month, he discovered the price had gone up. Rumors among thieves have made it more difficult to find a worthy and willing opponent. Lucre actually paid the man with one of his own coins, bearing the image of the miser Barckarl.

Personality

Lucre has two distinct facets to his personality. On the one hand, he is a guardian. The artificer who crafted his current form instilled in Lucre the deepest of commitments to protecting his charge from any threat. Lucre is passionately, perhaps insanely, devoted to defending the treasures in Ezekiel Barckarl's counting room. As time passes, however, his attitude will come to reflect that of the miser who brought him into being. He will protect his treasure, but will seek more as well.

The other side of the coin golem's personality stems from his previous "life" as a magical sword. Lucre is a cold, hard killer. What's more, he revels in his homicidal

tendencies. While guarding may be his obsession, killing is his passion. At first he was able to deny these feelings, but the first time that Lucre slew an intruder, he fell back under the spell of his original purpose. Now if he goes more than a month without a good, lethal melee, the golem begins to grow irritable and impatient. This is why he has taken to actually using the gold in his charge (a measure he abhors) to hire thieves that he can later slay.

Lucre has recently learned to be both independent and deceptive. He no longer answers to Ezekiel Barckarl and has taken pains to insure his own survival. He has hidden or distributed six of the coins that make up his body in Barckarl Manor so that he always has a safe haven to which he can escape. Though he will fight to the death to protect his treasure, it's not much of a sacrifice. To Lucre, "death" is temporary. He can simply wake up a few minutes later in a different coin.

Combat

Lucre takes to battle like any armored warrior. Though his body is hollow and he has no eyes, ears, or other sensory organs, the enchantment that binds him to the coins gives him the equivalent of normal human awareness. The weapon Lucre wields, though made only of blunt-edged coins, functions as a *long sword* +3.

Lucre is immune to fire spells and ordinary flame. Further, impaling weapons cause only quarter damage, because Lucre has no vital organs or flesh to pierce. Slashing weapons cause normal damage, since they can sever the joint between several coins. The most serious assault comes from a magical bludgeoning weapon, which inflicts double damage and causes great chunks of Lucre's body to fall away. In any case, however, a +2 or better weapon is required to hit.

In most cases, Lucre's body comprises just one of the magical coins cast for Barckarl, plus thousands of ordinary gold pieces. The magical coins serve as receptacles for Lucre's spirit and power (very similar to the way a phylactery holds a lich's essence). Though he may only be present in one coin at a time, Lucre can switch to any other host coin within a mile at will. If he wishes to switch to a coin beyond that range, he must make a Constitution check with a -1 cumulative penalty for each additional mile, to a minimum score of 1. One check is allowed each day. He cannot switch to a coin that lies across a closed domain border, however.

When he abandons a coin, the armor formed around it will instantly collapse into an inert, ordinary pile. Lucre may create a new body one round later, assuming there are enough gold coins touching his new host coin. The golem's body is normally formed from about 4,000 coins. If significantly fewer pieces of gold are available, Lucre's hit points should equal the number of coins under his sway, divided by 50.

It is up to you to determine where on his body Lucre has located his host coin. Any gold pieces that lose a direct link to that coin—in other words, any that become separated from his body—cease to be under Lucre's control. (That's why bludgeoning weapons such as maces cause the golem so much harm.)

Any fight with Lucre will be to the death. The golem has no fear of dying since he has seven host coins in the manor, most of them hidden (see the accompanying map). Four coins lie elsewhere in the city, in hiding places strung between the manor and the district where the golem seeks his victims. The final coin went to a thief.

Lucre is tough but not invincible. A host coin can be destroyed if it is melted, then targeted with *dispel magic*. Treat the individual coin as a 10th-level item. When Lucre has nowhere left to go, or cannot escape, he perishes. Further, any character can render the golem harmless simply by isolating and covering each and every host coin. A sack will suffice, as long as the cloth prevents the host coin from directly contacting another gold piece. If the golem controls even two stray coins, he can build a tiny body that will "run" to the nearest sizable pile of gold.

A HEART OF GOLD

This adventure can take place in any city large enough to provide a home to a fabulously wealthy miser and a good number of thieves. It is designed for four to six characters of levels 4 to 6 (about 20 levels total). The heroes have very little chance of actually destroying Lucre. If the heroes in your gaming group are more experienced, however, you might develop the adventure to make this more feasible.

In any case, burglary is a theme, so the group should include a rogue or two for best success. The plot entails investigating the strange and deadly challenge that Barckarl Manor poses to thieves, and at some point, the heroes will be skulking about the manor themselves.

Adventure Setup

If the heroes frequent the same city Ezekiel Barckarl inhabits, they become ensnared in the golem's tale after Lucre has killed about half a dozen times. Ezekiel has discovered the truth, but he is helpless to stop the golem. Most of the savaged bodies have been discovered, comparisons made, and now many thieves have begun to whisper among themselves in dismay, wondering what sort of foul play is afoot.

Should the heroes merely happen across this city their travels, the tale can take place further in the future, if you'd like. At this point, the local authorities and ordinary citizens may be aware of the trouble, offering more facts from which the heroes can work.

The Adventure Begins

The climax of this adventure takes place in Barckarl Manor, but many avenues can lead the heroes to the miser's doorstep. Two are outlined in detail below. In the first, the heroes are visiting a tavern where roguish fellows gather. They overhear someone discussing the latest fatality in a string of savage attacks against thieves. (You could easily change the setting to an inn, a marketplace, or a guild hall, if it suits your campaign. If the heroes have befriended a thief in this city some time ago, then consider making that thief one of Lucre's victims.) The scene can move immediately into the story or meander through as many encounters as you like. The place bustles with people, and the heroes may see many new and familiar faces—perhaps even a rival band of adventurers, if you'd really like to add depth to this tale.

In the second setup, Lucre himself approaches the heroes. You might even combine the two ploys, allowing Lucre to make this approach only if the heroes need added motivation to get involved in the story. For heightened suspense, however, it's best to keep Lucre mysterious until the climactic encounter. He might still be glimpsed in action early on—approaching someone else, for example—only to disappear into the night.

Trent is Dead, Too!

In this scene, the heroes overhear a group of thieves describing the death of Twelve-Fingered Trent, one of the hapless rogues who fell to Lucre's blade. Make Trent's tale as personally moving as possible; you want the heroes to feel inclined to take action. Though his audience seems to be a bit "deep in the cups," the man who is speaking is deadly serious about the trouble:

"I tell you, they just brought Twelve-Fingered Trent's body back to his family, and I have never seen a man bloodied so badly. That makes at least four dead in as many months, and not a one of them was known to work together. Somebody is out to get us, my friends. Somebody does not appreciate the fine art of resource reallocation, and he intends to kill every thief, cutpurse, and burglar in town. I, for one, do not intend to wait until he adds my name to the list—I am gone in the morning. I cannot say that I know where I'm going, but it surely has to be safer than here."

The group continues their conversation. They do not know what Trent was doing when he died, and they cannot link him to Barckarl Manor.

If the heroes have been in the city for some time, they know that there has been a rash of killings among the thief population. Every few weeks a body will turn

up with terrible wounds all over it. Someone is not only killing these men and women, but sadistically torturing them as well.

If the heroes are new to town, they can get the group to confide in them by convincing them that one or more of the heroes is "in the business." They reveal the information above, plus the fact that Trent was found with a strange gold coin in his pocket, one not minted by the local government, but made with extraordinary care and skill. They haven't actually seen it, however; they've only heard of it. Trent's wife supposedly has the coin, and she intends to leave town soon. For a price, the rogues will provide the heroes with directions to Trent's home.

Continue with "Legacy of Thieves" if the heroes want to speak to Trent's widow. Otherwise continue with "Too Good To Be True."

Legacy of Thieves

In this scene, the heroes meet the widow of Twelve-Fingered Trent. She tells them a little bit about the job Trent went on, and may be convinced to show them the mysterious coin from her husband's pocket. The purpose of the scene is to give the heroes some possibly misleading information, while still setting them on the track to investigate Barckarl Manor.

Trent's ramshackle one-room apartment sits directly behind a slaughterhouse. His widow, a red-headed spitfire named Hara, worked in the slaughterhouse earning enough to support herself and her husband in their meager lives. Meanwhile Trent tried desperately to swindle a big enough fortune to allow them to buy a small plot of land in the farm country. Unfortunately, he was a worse gambler than he was a thief (and he was not much of a thief).

Hara will mutter these things to anyone who'll listen (which typically is no one) as she packs up her few possessions. She pays the heroes no heed unless they seem particularly interested in her situation—then she becomes suspicious. Unless they convince her otherwise, the widow will begin to throw grime-encrusted household items at the heroes.

If they can convince Hara that they do not want to take the coin, but only wish to look at it, she'll eye them even more suspiciously. "If it's that important to you," she says, "you can buy it from me—for two gold pieces!" This is a small enough price to pay, and the woman desperately needs the money. The heroes could easily overpower Hara and steal the coin, but a powers check would be in order. And only if they pay her price will she reveal this vital information:

- Trent told her he was getting ready to make a "big score" at the home of a crazy old man called Ezekiel Barckarl. With the take from that place, he and Hara were going pay off Trent's gambling debts and leave the city forever. She doesn't think Trent died in connection with that job, though she can't be sure. Trent's body was found in an alley near his favorite

pub. She thinks it had something to do with his gambling debts or some other "stupid trouble" he got himself into without telling her.

- Trent told Hara he was hired for the Barckarl job by a mysterious man wearing a thick cloak over a suit of armor that seemed to be made of gold. The man asked Trent to steal a particular ruby about the size of a man's fist, and told him that he could keep anything else he got away with. "The whole thing was probably just some fantasy," she says. "But Trent did have that coin, so who knows?"
- Hara suspects that a group killed Trent, because "no one man could beat him so badly." She offers to show the heroes his body, which lies in the other room. Trent was stabbed with a fairly blunt object more times than they can count. It looks like he was tortured for hours.

The coin: When the heroes look at the coin, show them the accompanying illustration or sketch a copy. No hero has seen a coin like this before. The head bears the image of a hawk-nosed old man with a vicious scowl etched on his face. The tail has an image of a human heart and the inscription *aureus est anima*. Any character who makes a successful read languages roll (or cast the *read languages* spell) knows that this translates from a long-dead language as "gold is life."

A *detect magic* spell will reveal that the coin is enchanted, but no other useful information may be gleaned by examining it either magically or mundanely. However, if the heroes show the coin around or do some clever sleuthing, eventually someone recognizes the face on the coin as Ezekiel Barckarl. If the heroes are long-time residents of the city, they can tell this with a successful Intelligence check.

If the heroes decide to go to the apparent scene of the crime, continue with "Barckarl Manor." Otherwise, go to "Too Good To Be True."



Too Good To Be True

If the heroes refuse to take any of the hints meant to lead them to Barckarl Manor, Lucre approaches one of them directly. The golem hopes to hire another thief or two so he can enjoy another evening of bloody amusement. Read aloud or paraphrase the following:



The man before you wears the cloak of a friar, with the hood pulled up around his face. It is impossible to make out any of his features, but as he sits down you notice the glint of polished metal—he's wearing armor of some sort.

LUCRE

"I have a proposal for you," he begins, in a deep, rasping voice. "The miser Ezekiel Barckarl has something of mine—something I want back: a ruby the size of your fist. Bring it here tomorrow at noon, and I'll pay you twice its considerable value for your troubles. Furthermore, you can keep any other treasure you carry off. I understand that Barckarl has a hoard worthy of the mightiest dragon."

The mysterious stranger is reluctant to talk much. If asked why he cannot go into the manor himself, he says a personal liability prevents him from doing so. (If pressed, he might say he lost his hand along with the ruby when Barckarl stole it, then shift his coins to show a stump.) Once the meeting is concluded for good or ill, Lucre leaves and tries to disappear into the city crowd. He is fast, clever, and infinitely flexible; success should not be too difficult. However, if the heroes chase him, he may be forced into some contortion that causes him to lose a scrap of clothing and a small pile of gold—providing some clue as to his nature.

Barckarl Manor

The adventure reaches its climax in the home of Ezekiel Barckarl. Read aloud or paraphrase the following when the heroes approach it:

In its prime, Barckarl Manor was certainly host to many a high-society ball. Now it stands lonely and dilapidated. The shutters are broken and hanging by single hinges, where they hang at all. A hideous gargoyle face is carved into the weathered front door, and a ring in its nose provides a disused knocker. It seems as though no one has passed through this portal for decades. Except for the light burning in the second-story window above, the manor appears abandoned.

Ezekiel has neglected the manor for two reasons: he doesn't want to draw attention to his fortune, and he is a cheapskate. Many different story paths may lead the heroes to his home—including sheer greed. Develop the final scenes accordingly.

The heroes can explore the manor at will; play up its creepy, almost haunted atmosphere. Lucre waits patiently in the counting room, and Barckarl sits in his bedroom, oblivious to any burglary in progress. Skulking thieves should hear mysterious creaks in every room, and see suspicious shadows looming over every doorway. Valiant champions of the victims' families should be constantly reminded of the sorrow and tragedy that has issued from this house—blood

stains on hard-wood floors, the wind keening like a piteous death rattle.

First Floor: Knocking on the door will yield no reply (Ezekiel is lost in his madness, and the notion of answering the door doesn't even occur to Lucre). The door is open, though, and the heroes can walk in freely. The ground floor was built for the express purpose of entertaining guests—from individuals to teeming crowds. The banquet hall holds great tables that, while termite-eaten now, could certainly have seated sixty or seventy guests at a time. At least three times that number could have been accommodated in the ballroom, which includes a 30-foot ceiling and a raised stage where the greatest musicians in the city once played private recitals. An ornately carved stairway leads to a balcony on the second floor. Doors to either side of the stairs lead to the private dining room (larger than most houses in the city), the kitchen, and then back to the servants' quarters, which have stood empty since Ezekiel Barckarl decided that a cook and a maid were expenses he could do without.

Library: Barckarl's library houses an incredible collection of books. It includes the classics of literature, science, poetry, philosophy, and theology.

The great fireplace holds a pile of sputtering embers; obviously someone has been here recently. A leather couch and several plush chairs are positioned before hearth, though one of the chairs sits closer to the grate than the others. On the floor next to this chair lies a gnarled club with a spiked ball embedded in the head. On the seat rests a book entitled *Redemption through Retribution*. It lies open to a page with the following passage underlined:

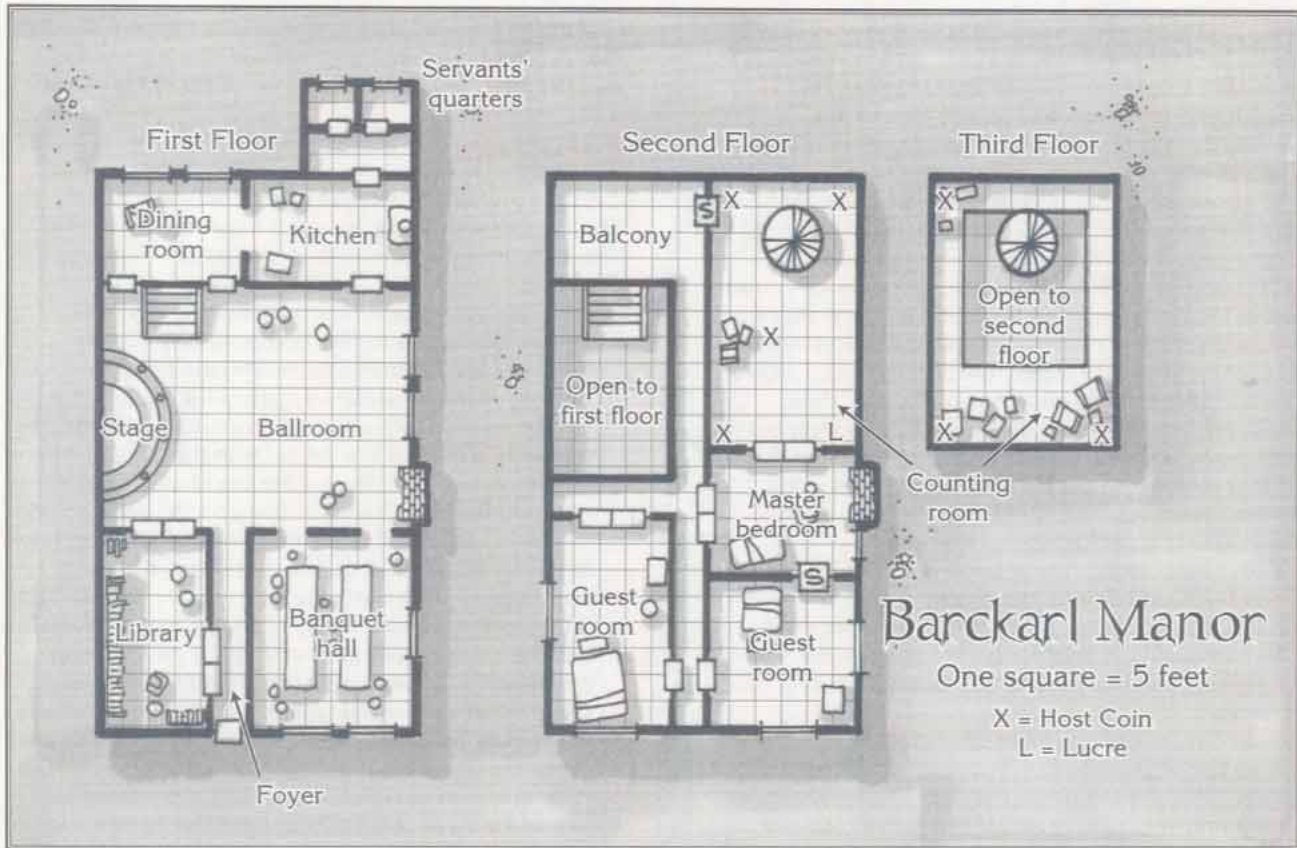
"The path to redemption lies not only in confronting your adversaries but in fighting them with all the passion they have stolen from your life—strike them down with no mercy!"

From this tidbit, the heroes may get the idea that Barckarl himself is the murderer. The mace, though it seems corroded and useless, is enchanted (+2/+3 against undead). It is just another abused piece of the miser's collection.

The Upper Floors: When the heroes climb the grand staircase, they find themselves on a balcony that might very well have seated royalty at one time. Moth-eaten tapestries cover the walls, which themselves have decayed to the point of having holes. Most of this area overlooks the ballroom; a ledge runs around the room's perimeter.

Two guestrooms also can be found on this floor. Both contain beds with torn canopies, mirrors caked with dust and grime, and dressers pocked with deep gouges and rodent tooth-marks. The only other rooms on this level are the master bedroom and the counting room.

Master Bedroom: Beyond a pair of heavy wooden doors, Ezekiel Barckarl awaits. Aside from a trip to the library, he has barely left his bedroom for days. When



the heroes enter the room, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

A decaying bedroom lies beyond, and though it looks barely inhabitable, the bedclothes are rumpled, and a roaring fire burns in the hearth. A withered old man is sitting in a cracked leather chair before the fire, wearing a nightgown and a sleeping cap. A small pouch lies in his lap. Though you're clearly standing in his line of sight, he pays you no heed. He is holding a piece of gold up to his face. The firelight glints off its surface as the old man mutters to the coin, as if he has no other audience.

Ezekiel Barckarl has gone mad. The realization that his greed, embodied in Lucre, was responsible for such heinous and premeditated murders caused him to repent his miserly ways. However, Lucre will not let Barckarl divest himself of one ounce of treasure. The strain of this situation snapped the old man's mind and has left him a raving lunatic. As the heroes enter, he is holding up a gold coin (not one of Lucre's host coins) and talking to it as if it were the golem itself.

"You cannot do such things," he says. "No number of

you and your brothers is worth a mortal soul. You must stop this. Gold yearns to be spent. So fly away now, and buy me some peace of mind."

Ezekiel tosses the coin into the fire, then draws out another from the pouch on his lap. He will continue to rant this way, completely ignoring the heroes. If they physically shake him, he will shift his gaze to their faces but will continue with exactly the same monologue.

Counting Room: The final room in the mansion is the counting room. Ezekiel has hoarded his treasure here for years, and now it is the lair of Lucre the coin golem. It rises two stories tall and is filled with overflowing with silver, gold, and platinum pieces; jewels of every color, shape, and size; statues; weapons; artifacts; and priceless works of art. Among these items are two magical weapons: a +2 *saber*, and a +3 *bullet sling*. Place these weapons (which will prove effective against Lucre) at specific places in the area.

Several suits of armor grace the counting room. Some are even gold plated to confuse intruders. Lucre stands among them. The golem has placed several host coins around the room so that he can switch bodies quickly.

Unless the heroes pose an immediate threat, the golem remains completely motionless; it's best, he thinks, to simply let them look around while he sizes them up. If the heroes obviously know what they are

LUCRE

seeking, or they cast a magical spell that may reveal Lucre's location, or if they move to pick up one of his host coins, Lucre attacks with obvious zeal. He compliments any hero who strikes him with a particularly effective blow, and he fully intends to fight to the "death."

Chances are pretty good that the heroes will make fairly short work of Lucre. Of course, his secret advantage is that when they "kill" him, his mind automatically switches to another host coin in the room (whose locations are marked on the map). A round later he rises from a mound of gold coins and resumes the attack. If the heroes flee, the fight is over—unless Lucre decides to hunt them down at a later date. Otherwise, Lucre eventually will be able to wear the party down, unless they find a way to make the golem feel that prolonging the fight would be in his worst interest. There are several ways the heroes may accomplish this, including the following:

- If they ever defeat one of Lucre's bodies in one combat round or less, the golem will admit that he might be outclassed, and retreat to one of the coins he has hidden in another part of the city. Each lies in a loosely tied pouch next to a handful of other gold pieces.
- If the heroes capture three of Lucre's host coins, he may flee to provide a diversion or secure another coin. That doesn't mean the fight is over; the golem may return later to seek his vengeance (at your discretion).

When the battle is over, the heroes should believe they killed the coin golem once and for all. The truth is, though, that the best they can do is drive Lucre into hiding for a time. Only you will know the difference—until Lucre returns in a future adventure.

Spreading The Wealth

Once Lucre has been driven off, Ezekiel Barckarl regains some (if not all) of his sanity. He thanks the heroes profusely and offers them exorbitant rewards, at least three times the treasure they would normally expect from such an adventure, including magical weapons. While they are arguing and fighting with one another over the treasure and magical items, read aloud or paraphrase the following:

"My friends, my friends! Do not let the material things in this life grab hold of your hearts. Remember, gold is like a good meal—no matter how much of it you have, it always leaves you in the end. The only real treasures in the world are family, friends, and true-hearted companions!"

If the heroes get greedy, Ezekiel warns them that his money was a curse to him, and it will be a curse to them as well. You decide the true weight of his words.

Recurrence

It is highly unlikely that the heroes will be able to destroy Lucre entirely, and you may want to make him a recurring villain in your campaign. Here are few ideas:

- After the events of *A Heart of Gold*, the penitent Ezekiel Barckarl asks the heroes to help him to distribute his fortune to those who are needy and worthy, offering a sizable payment for the job. (Of course, he also lectures the heroes about not making the same mistakes that he did with their lives.) After a full day or two of redistributing the wealth, the heroes return to Barckarl Manor to find an incensed Ezekiel. "I told you to get rid of the gold—not bring more back here!" he exclaims. It seems that Lucre still had a host coin or two among the treasure. He has allowed the heroes "give him away," then has stolen all the gold he could gather and returned to the counting room—actually increasing the amount of treasure there. What's more, the golem has killed at least one of the poor recipients. What will the heroes do to keep Lucre out of their charitable works?
- After encountering the heroes, Lucre develops a hatred for them and seeks vengeance. In this case, a simple assault won't do. Some time in the future, when the heroes are guests in someone's home, they awaken to hear their host cry out. A thief, it seems, sneaked in during the night and stole the man's gold (but nothing else). Lucre has "framed" the heroes; the gold is discovered in their possession. If need be, the golem repeats the ploy, hoping to ruin the heroes' reputation and wear them down before he moves in for the kill.
- Months or years pass after the heroes first encountered Lucre. (Or perhaps they have never encountered him at all.) As the heroes look for treasure after defeating a foe or monster, they find an extra sack that contains one single gold coin—one of Lucre's host coins. The fallen foe had recognized the coin golem for what he was, and separated him into a sack all by himself (making it impossible for him to generate a body). If the heroes add Lucre to their own treasure, he will create what body he can while the heroes sleep, and steal away under cover of darkness. The heroes could, theoretically lose a great fortune before they figure out exactly what is going on.



*In prison's oppression, in sorrow's obsession, I weary for thee.
With sighing and crying bowed down as dying,
I adore thee, I implore thee, set me free!*

—Mary, Queen of Scots

Prayer written in her Book of Devotion before her execution.

BIOGRAPHY



Love may move mountains, but *obsessive* love grants life. The priest called Landall Dolan knew this dark emotion well. His passion for a glass beauty breathed life into her leaded veins, just before he, alas, had to die. Remarkably, the beauty returned his passion in kind, and now only his unholy resurrection can mend her shattered heart.

Lumina

Stained Glass Golem, Neutral

Armor Class	4	Str	10
Movement	12	Dex	13
Level/Hit Dice	9	Con	8
Hit Points	40	Int	15
THACO	11	Wis	14
Morale	20	Cha	18
No. of Attacks	1	XP	6,000
Damage/Attack	2d6		
Special Attacks	<i>Prismatic spray</i>		
Special Defenses	+2 or better magical weapons to hit; immune to mind- and life-affecting spells; regeneration		
Special Vulnerabilities	Prayer (<i>zeitgeber</i>); blunt weapons; <i>shatter</i> ; <i>dispel magic</i>		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

Appearance

Lumina resembles a portrait of the goddess Ezra rendered in stained glass, though the artist took several liberties with her attire. Her raven hair and eyes contrast starkly with her pale skin and long red gown, and the sun causes her image to shimmer with radiance. Despite her sweet smile, Lumina creates an air of sadness and loss.

On her head, Lumina wears a gorgeous jeweled tiara, bearing all the colors of the rainbow. Her left hand holds out a large sprig of wolfsbane, a symbol of healing for the church. With her right hand, she seems to beckon the viewer closer, almost pleadingly.

When she moves, one can hear a faint tinkling like falling glass, but the sound seems to come from several

directions at once. Her translucent body is almost as thin as a sliver, so Lumina becomes virtually invisible when she turns to the side.

Background

Lumina's creator, Landall Dolan, was a priest of Ezra. The tiny lawful-good temple he joined celebrated the healing aspects of this gentle goddess. Having given up his life as an artist, Brother Dolan found fulfillment in devoting his life to her service.

When his fellow priests asked him to create a stained glass window portraying Ezra, his heart leapt. This would give him the chance to again use his artistic talents, but for a greater purpose than ever before. Now his talents would sing the praises of his goddess and dazzle her followers with her radiance!



LUMINA

Landall immediately started his work, vowing he would accept nothing less than perfection in such an important project. He chose his supplies with extreme care and sent several young women out of the chapel in tears before choosing an acceptable model.

When at last the time arrived for him to begin his artistry, the priest shut himself away in a small workshop behind the church, working without pause from the first ray of dawn until the darkness overtook him. After the first month, he even refused entrance to the young woman he had chosen as a model, handing her a small pouch of coins and telling her that she was no longer needed.

As the second month passed, Landall fell deeply in love with the image before him. A marriage of his artistic soul and spiritual devotion, the work took on a divine meaning. He was quite sure that no other image of Ezra had ever been so radiant. To further enhance his beautiful art, he decided to deviate from the traditional depiction of Ezra, giving her a red gown and a jeweled tiara. Though he feared that the other priests would not understand these liberties, he sensed that they pleased his creation. Somehow, he knew she would not accept the name of Ezra, so Landall called his beauty Lumina.

When the window was complete, Brother Dolan did not wish to share his creation. The thought of other priests gazing on his beloved Lumina sickened him. Seeking guidance, he fell to his knees before the stained glass and began to pray aloud—not to Ezra, but to the figure herself! When he had finished, she reached down and pulled him to his feet, soothing him with words of love. Landall had given life to his art, and he felt his spirit being drawn into her radiant embrace.

The next morning, the artist awakened to find Lumina missing. Rushing to the chapel, he saw that his work of art had taken its place in the window above the altar. Clustered below it were his fellow priests, who now turned toward him angrily. They parted as Mother Elizabeth, the head of the parish, passed through the throng and approached him.

Landall was unprepared for his superior's cruel accusations of heresy and sacrilege. Without thinking, he lashed out, striking her across the face. At once, the other priests rushed in and forced Landall to the ground, and when he cried out, Lumina tried to protect him. Her *prismatic spray* blinded most of Landall's captors. They clutched at their eyes, and several began to stumble about, while others kneeled and began praying aloud to Ezra. At once, the glass golem became motionless.

Landall rose and surveyed the room. Mother Elizabeth had been turned to stone by the spray of light, and many priests were lying on the ground. Terrified that the survivors would either punish him for this tragedy or, even worse, destroy Lumina for it, Landall searched for a weapon. His eyes lighted on the wall near the altar, where there hung a slender sword and kite shield, holy objects to the goddess Ezra. Desperate, he pulled down the sword and turned on his companions.

Though blinded, the anchorites were not completely defenseless, and a bloody frenzy ensued. One by one, Landall slaughtered most of his fellow priests, suffering many blows in turn. Finally, only Brother Alfred remained to fight. Unlike the others, he was not blind, but the golem's attack had driven him mad. He picked up the altar candelabra and clubbed Landall's skull again and again as the artist dragged himself toward the image of Lumina. Landall died at her feet, and Brother Alfred ran screaming into the forest. That was only days ago, and the horrific scene still lies in the chapel, awaiting discovery.

Personality

Lumina is devastated by the loss of Landall Dolan. As he came to love her deeply, so too did she love him. And as he slowly turned from Ezra to worship Lumina instead, so too did the golem worship him. Given life by his obsession, she feels empty without his adoration. As long as his body remains near, Lumina remains somewhat sated, but if it is removed, she becomes increasingly mad with grief. She will use her own obsession to recreate her creator in the body of another.

Combat

When Lumina attacks, she usually has the advantage of surprise. If her targets have no reason to suspect her, they suffer a -3 penalty on their surprise rolls.

Once in combat, Lumina strikes out with her hands, slicing with her sharp edges and inflicting 2d6 points of damage. Each successful hit also requires her foes to make a successful saving throw vs. spell or suffer the effects of a modified *emotion* spell for 2d4 rounds. Because of her tragic loss, Lumina can create only negative emotions in her victims; thus, those who fail their saves are affected by (1) fear, (2) hate, (3) hopelessness, or (4) sadness. See the *Player's Handbook* for the results of these emotions.

There is a percentage chance equal to the damage inflicted by each of Lumina's attacks that a small sliver of glass is imbedded in her opponent's wound. If this happens, the victim becomes moody and irritable; he or she must make a successful saving throw every day (at sunrise) or succumb to the *emotion* spell, this time for 2d4 hours. The problem continues until the sliver is discovered and removed—a difficult task at best.

Once every three rounds, Lumina can unleash her *prismatic spray*. Everyone (friend or foe, except for her creator) within 25 feet is struck automatically.

Because she is made of glass, Lumina is particularly fragile. Blunt weapons (of +2 or better enchantment) inflict double damage on her. Further, a *shatter* spell weakens her such that all subsequent melee attacks have a percentage chance equal to twice the number of points of damage inflicted of instantly destroying her.

Unless she is destroyed, a *mend* spell instantly

restores Lumina to full hit points. Further, she regenerates 1 hit point per round in direct sunlight (or its equivalent).

Zeitgeber: Because it was Brother Dolan's final orison that sparked her life, Lumina is particularly susceptible to prayers. In the presence of anyone who fervently prays aloud to any goddess, she becomes entranced, and cannot move or act. Effectively, she is paralyzed for the duration of the litany.

GRAVEN IMAGES



Because this scenario manipulates the heroes to a certain extent, it requires cooperative and experienced players for best effect. The haunting events that unfold will cause some heroes in the group to work toward conflicting ends, which they may try to keep secret from their fellows.

Several heroes experience a private mental torment or undergo a secret event that will require you to take the corresponding players aside, or at least pass them notes. To heighten suspense, you might create "secret messages" for other players too.

While the players should be experienced, the heroes can be of any level. The adventure does not emphasize combat; in fact, the heroes might resolve the story without any battle whatsoever. But if they do trade blows with Lumina, they will definitely need magical weapons of at least +2 or better enchantment.

The adventure takes place in Lumina's tiny church. It lies about a mile outside a city.

The Adventure Begins

Only a few days have passed since the tragic events following Lumina's awakening. Since that time, no one has entered the chapel. The locals rarely visit during the week, so the horrible scene remains.

Guiding the heroes to the chapel should be easy. If they have any dealings with the Church of Ezra (or whatever church you have substituted), a friend of the faith asks them to deliver a letter to the chapel. Read the following to the players, or better yet, transcribe it:

Mother Elizabeth,

I must admit that this matter leaves me quite perplexed. If Brother Dolan has gone so far as to actually name his work and perform devotions at her feet, then you are right; we will have to take action. Who knows where this sort of obsession could lead?

As for the piece itself, I am not sure I understand your concern. Surely you do not believe that she has taken on a life of her own? It is only an object after all. Perhaps Brother Dolan has begun talking to himself in

his dementia. I suggest that he be locked in his room (for his own safety, of course) until I arrive next week. We can then deal with the situation at that time.

*In Ezra's name,
Father Johan*

The Murder Scene

The chapel itself is barely visible from the road. Behind it lies a small shed, which mad Brother Albert recently attempted to burn, but it cannot be seen until the heroes explore. If the heroes call out, there's no response. A horrible stench becomes evident as they near the scene. When they enter the chapel, read or paraphrase the following text to the players:

Looking into the room, you are immediately assaulted by the bloodbath before you. The bodies of no fewer than ten priests lie strewn about, most of them crumpled near the altar. One of them still wears his sleeping gown though he clutches a long sword.

An eerie glow falls over those men and women, coming from the large stained glass window above them. In the glass is the figure of a beautiful woman with dark hair and a red gown. Her slender, delicate features suggest a frailty mirrored in her large, sad eyes. The bejeweled tiara on her head sends out a prismatic glow across the room, coloring the dead men with blues, greens, and reds.

Standing beside the altar is an extremely lifelike stone statue of a female priest. Her arms are crossed over her chest, and she glowers at you angrily, as though you have disrupted her sermon.

Depending on the relationships the heroes may have with the church (or even the priests), this scene might require horror checks.

The stone statue is what became of Mother Elizabeth. If the heroes suspect any sort of golem after reading the letter, they may assume that *she* is the creature. You can easily play this up by having them make Intelligence checks when investigating the statue—or even walking near it. Any time you have to give secret information to a player in this adventure (such as with the corpse candle or Lumina's visions, both described below), you can give another player suspicious information about this statue. Mother Elizabeth might appear to move, make a sound, follow the hero with her eyes, catch the hero's clothing, or seem to be in a slightly different place than she was the last time the hero saw her.

LUMINA

If the heroes investigate Lumina, they discover a tiny inscription in the bottom right corner of the glass window: "Only in prayer can one find peace." This provides a vital clue about her special weakness.

None of the priests in this room is alive. Brother Alfred—the sole survivor—remains in the woods. He has returned to the chapel only once, when he set fire to the shed out back. Any hero who makes a successful Intelligence check with a –2 penalty notices a set of bloody footprints leaving the room. Alfred is not hard to track, but the task is time-consuming; he has been wandering aimlessly for several days. (See "Brother Alfred" below if the heroes successfully track him.)

The heroes may investigate the bodies, or at least bury them. Remember, looting or stealing from the priests or the church definitely calls for a powers check.

The Corpse Candle

One of the priests lingers in the chapel as a corpse candle, a tormented spirit that can take hold of a character who views the dead body. (The creature is fully described in *RAVENLOFT MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix III*, but a summary appears here for ease of play.) The ghost haunts an unsuspecting hero and attempts to force him or her to avenge its death. Unfortunately, this particular corpse candle does not fully understand what will put it to rest. It knows that someone responsible for its death must pay, but Landall is already dead. It does not understand that Lumina came to life, or that she had anything to do with its murder. Furthermore, it cannot give much information to the hero who discovers it, because the dead priest was blinded by Lumina's attack.

Corpse Candle: AC 4; MV 12, FL 24 (B); HD 6; hp 30; THACO 15; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 (flames); SA mental suggestion, *affect normal fires* (per spell), *burning hands* (1d3+12); SD spell immunity, +1 or better magical weapon to hit; SW turning; SZ M; ML steady (11); Int avg (10); AL CN; XP 1,400.

Special Abilities: SD—Immune to *sleep*, *charm*, *hold* and death spells, as well as cold-based spells, poison, and paralyzation. SW—Can be turned as 6th-level undead, but will return to its champion as soon as possible. *True seeing* reveals the image of the ghost sitting astride its champion's (its victim's) shoulders. A *protection from evil* or *negative plane protection* forces it away only for the duration of the spell. It can be permanently driven off by casting *dispel magic*, *dismissal*, *banishment*, *holy word*, or *wish*. If a *speak with dead* spell is used, the spirit only repeats the name of its killer.

Designate a dead body to harbor the corpse candle. Any hero who examines this body closely must make a saving throw vs. spell (with a –3 penalty for looking directly into its eyes). A successful saving throw indicates

that the hero notices a dim glow in the priest's eyes, which soon fades. A failed saving throw produces more dramatic results. Once a hero has fallen under the ghost's influence (becomes the creature's "champion"), others may look into the dead priest's eyes with no effect.

If a character fails the saving throw, the ghost now sits astride his or her shoulders, vexing and unseen. Pull the player aside and read the following text privately or pass a note with the following information:

A vision overcomes you. This is your church. You and your fellow priests are standing near the altar, and you are upset. The angry whispers of your companions come to a halt as a young priest rushes into the chapel in his sleeping gown. The high priestess strides forward to greet the wild-eyed man. "Be careful, Mother Elizabeth," you hear yourself mutter softly. "He looks dangerous."

Though you cannot hear the words exchanged between the high priestess and the intruder, you can sense the anger mounting. Without warning, the young priest strikes out at Mother Elizabeth. You rush forward to help subdue the heretic, but suddenly, a flash of brilliant light blinds your eyes. Pain wracks your body, and screams fill the air. Unsure of what is happening, you make out the sounds of prayer around you. You try to join in, but the agony becomes unbearable, leaving you breathless and disoriented. A few short screams try to break the cadence, and they seem to quiet it a little.

Footsteps draw near. You whisper a plea for help, but your only reward is a sharp pain in your chest and then nothingness. . . .

After a few seconds, the hero "reawakens," standing over the dead body. Although the hero suffers no physical harm from the attack in the vision, he or she does feel the pain of the priest's fatal wound. In the wake of this terrible experience, the hero feels a compelling urge to avenge this horrible murder.

The vision comes to mind again whenever the hero looks at an open flame, steam, smoke, or even clouds. With each episode, the hero feels an excruciating spark of pain from the imaginary wound, and the desire for vengeance grows. The obsession builds until either the tormented spirit's death is avenged or the corpse candle is otherwise appeased. The latter occurs if Lumina herself finds "eternal peace" after someone buries Landall below her window. If the hero chooses to ignore the visions for more than 1d4 days, the corpse candle harries the champion into action using its power to *affect normal fires*. This power behaves like the 1st-level spell, except that the flames can leap up to 10 feet and cause a maximum of 1d6 points of damage.

Note that the hero only sees Mother Elizabeth from behind in the vision. As a result, he or she will have a hard time recognizing the statue in the chapel as the same woman. If the hero closely inspects the statue, have the player make an Intelligence check with a -6 penalty. Success indicates the realization that the statue and the high priestess are one and the same.

Changing Visions: Because the corpse candle is unaware of Lumina's existence (other than as a heretical piece of art), it does not initially understand her role in its plight. But when the "possessed" hero learns something about the murder, the corpse candle learns it too. So when the hero realizes Lumina is alive, the spirit will urge the hero to destroy her, imparting visions that emphasize Lumina's presence and play up the flash of blinding light. Alter the vision the hero experiences as follows:



Once again, you are standing among your brothers and sisters as the high priestess greets the dissident. Again, he strikes Mother Elizabeth, and you rush forward to subdue him. The bright light flashes behind you, but you are not blinded this time. Instead, you see everything through a blood-red haze as you fall to the floor in agony.

As you turn your head toward the flash, the blasphemous image of Ezra steps down from the window, her face contorted in an evil glare. A fellow priest stumbles over to help you, but the glass goddess raises her hands and shoots bolts of mystical light from her razor-sharp fingertips. A searing pain sinks into your eyes, and suddenly you can see no more. . . .



Obviously, this vision represents the corpse candle's speculation on what happened, not the true events. Another change in the corpse candle's view occurs when a different hero receives visions directly from Lumina. See "Recreating Brother Dolan" for details.

The Shed

Hardly anything remains of the small workshop behind the chapel. Brother Alfred (the mad survivor) set it aflame. A few locals actually saw the smoke and came to investigate, but Brother Alfred sent them away, shouting, "Everything is fine now, brothers and sisters. The fire will cleanse this place of its evil!" Curious, but not wanting to displease one of Ezra's chosen, the townspeople left.

If the heroes search the ruins, they may find a blackened vial or two of colored powder, lots of small strips of lead, files, some thin molds, bits of broken glass, and a charred book full of poems and litanies to Ezra—some have been changed to "Lumina."

Moving Brother Dolan

If the heroes move Landall's body from its location below the window, Lumina grows morose. As soon as all the heroes have left the room, she begins to cry. Any hero who nears the scene hears the sound of a woman sobbing.

As soon as someone returns to the room, Lumina immediately ceases crying. However, anyone who looks closely at the window finds tears on her face.

Unless they attack her or mutilate Landall's body, Lumina does not wish to animate yet. She is still shocked by the effects of her last spell, and she would rather not hurt anyone else. She simply wants to be near her love.

Recreating Brother Dolan

After Landall has been moved and perhaps buried, Lumina tries to "recreate" him by slowly forcing his spirit into one of the heroes. She misses her love and needs the devotion that Landall lavished upon her.

Not just any vessel will do. She automatically rejects the person haunted by the corpse candle. Beyond that, her preferences are as follows, in order: a male priest, a male spellcaster, any male, any priest, any spellcaster, any hero. If two heroes have equal standing, she favors the one with the highest Charisma.

After she selects a hero, Lumina begins to plant Landall's memories into his mind. This prompts a series of visions, triggered by events and places that held significance to Landall or Lumina. The viewpoint is subjective, often slanting the truth. Several visions are outlined below; add more if you'd like. *To save space, text that can be read aloud appears in quotes.*

Brother Alfred: When the hero sees the mad survivor, the following vision is triggered:

"The older monk slowly approaches, brandishing a large candelabra and gibbering nonsense.

"Stay away, Alfred," you hear yourself saying nervously, but still he grows nearer. You swing your sword, but your foot slips on the bloody steps. Before you can catch your balance, Alfred strikes, hitting you again and again with the heavy metal scone."

In the Shed: When the hero investigates the ruined shed, disclose the following vision to the player:

"You hunch intently over the workbench as you arrange the delicate pieces of glass. The lovely face you have held in your mind for months becomes a reality as you work. With pride, you realize that your creation far exceeds all other visions of the goddess. No one has been able to capture her beauty and grace like this. The greatest works of art pale in comparison to the masterpiece that is taking shape. Enraptured by her brilliance, you dub your creation *Lumina*."

The Sword: Handling the sword from Ezra's altar triggers this vision:

"You stand in front of the altar, holding Ezra's own holy sword as your fellow priests advance on you threateningly. Fearfully, you back up, but they will not relent in their murderous pursuit. Their chanted prayers sound blasphemous to your ears, and the sword in your hand glitters brightly—obviously a sign of her approval. Heartened, you step forward and begin swinging the sword before you, striking down your former brothers and staining Ezra's sword with their tainted blood."

Prayer Vigil: If no other heroes are around, Lumina appears before the chosen hero any time he prays. She does not disturb him, but instead stands quietly before him until his litany is complete. She then disappears, returning to her window.

Alone in the Chapel: Another vision could come any time the hero is alone in the chapel:

"Without warning, the beautiful woman from the stained glass window turns and leans toward you. 'Landall,' she murmurs, 'You have returned! I have been so lonely since you were taken away from me. I could not rest without you at my feet.' Then she leans back into the window. Her eyes close and a faint smile plays upon her lips, as if she has drifted into blissful sleep."

Away from the Chapel: Anytime the chosen hero is alone and away from the chapel, Lumina may impart the following vision:

"With the sound of tinkling glass, the stained glass woman steps out in front of you. Her luminous eyes take you in with relief as a large tear rolls down her face. 'Landall, why must you leave me? You created me to love you, yet you reject my affections. Without you near me, I do not believe I can go on. If only you were still below my window. . . .' At that, she turns away and walks back toward the chapel."

Separation Anxiety: If the hero abandons Lumina and the temple, he suffers from nightmares in which she is in danger, waking with her name on his lips. The threat changes each time. (Perhaps undead invade the chapel, or Brother Alfred burns the building.) The hero feels the urgent need to return to the chapel to protect Lumina.

Each time the hero experiences one of the visions detailed above, he becomes more deeply affected. Like Landall himself, the hero slowly becomes obsessed with Lumina, feeling the need to protect her and staying near her whenever possible. Since he might not be able to trust the other heroes, he will probably keep his haunting visions secret. (Explain this carefully to the player.)

Eventually, the hero will acquire some of Landall's traits. (You determine the pace, but severe changes shouldn't occur unless the hero leaves.) Acquired traits include a craving for trout, Landall's favorite food; a birthmark below the right ear; the ability to cast *light* once per day; nervousness around priests, caused by his death; and an affinity for drawing and carving.

Lumina also changes. The more firmly Landall becomes implanted in the hero's psyche, the more likely it is that she will become animate. Just as she would protect Landall's body, now she will protect that hero. And to ensure his presence, Lumina will protect herself too.

The Corpse Candle: Note that the corpse candle senses Landall's returning spirit and sends a vision to its champion. Even if the ghost has already shifted its focus to Lumina, it will demand that its champion address the "new" Landall too. (As usual, you should impart this to the appropriate player in private.)

To the corpse candle, Landall's ghostly face becomes superimposed over Lumina's chosen hero, creating a double image. The creature realizes this is the man responsible for its death and imparts this knowledge to its champion. The hero sees the double image too, then sees the dead priest's face turn and smile. The imaginary chest wound throbs, and from this point on, the corpse candle urges its champion to punish the "new" Landall (as well as Lumina). This will most certainly cause strife between the two heroes.

Brother Alfred

If the heroes track the surviving priest, he gibbers insanely and tries to run away. If they manage to catch or soothe him, he gives the following responses no matter what the heroes say or ask.

Roll

1d6 Response

- 1 "She came to life . . . shooting light . . . and then darkness . . ."
- 2 "Red? Why red? It should be white!"
- 3 "Ezra is pure and good. She is not a whore! How dare you!"
- 4 "And he killed them with Ezra's sword . . . with her own holy sword."
- 5 "We were all blinded, but not *him*. *He* could still see. And he killed them all. . . ."
- 6 "Never go near the windows, my children. . . ."

Under no circumstances will Brother Alfred enter the chapel or go near Lumina's stained glass window.

Conclusion

The heroes can resolve this adventure in several ways. The easiest way to satisfy Lumina (thereby ending the transformation of her "new" creator) is to bury Landall's body below the stained glass window. This also appeases the corpse candle.

Alternatively, the heroes can opt to simply destroy Lumina, though this does not prove easy. She is quite resilient, and her special powers may scar the party permanently even if they are successful.

And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of the members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off.

—Matthew 5:29–30

BIOGRAPHY



When a man loses his faith, something must fill the void. Some new god or passion oozes into the wound, festering and corrupting the moribund spirit. Wearing by war and death, Lian Punchinel sought to control the components of life like a master puppeteer. He has filled his household with bizarre little constructs. Not one has a body others would call complete, but each is a faithful and handy servant—for a time, at least.

Lian de Loranche Punchinel

10th-Lvl Artificer/7th Lvl Cleric, Neutral Good

Armor Class	10	Str	8
Movement	12	Dex	13
Level	10/7	Con	10
Hit Points	50	Int	17
THACO	17	Wis	15
Morale	11 (steady)	Cha	9
No. of Attacks	1	XP	Nil
Damage/Attack	1d4		
Special Attacks	Spells		
Special Defenses	Spells		
Special Vulnerabilities	Nil		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

Wizard Spells (4/4/3/2/2): 1st—armor, cantrips, hypnotism, mending; 2nd—deepockets, ESP, forget, irritation; 3rd—hold undead, infravision, item; 4th—emotion, Rary's mnemonic enhancer; 5th—animate dead, domination.

Priest Spells (5/4/2/1): 1st—cure light wounds (x2), entangle, magic stone, shillelagh; 2nd—aid, hold person, resist fire, slow poison; 3rd—animate dead, cure serious wounds; 4th—imbue with spells.

Notes: Lian can stitch dead flesh together and animate it, provided it is no more than a week old. His spectacles have been enchanted with *permanent comprehend languages*; they allow him to talk with min'kins. His *vest of deepockets* holds empty containers, food, a handkerchief, a "handyman" (see below), herbal salves, a lit candle, a mug of tea, notebooks, a paperweight, a quill and ink, a pipe, and a surgical toolbag.

Appearance

Lian's creations are described below. As for the man himself, he is small, bent by the weight of time, and withered by the loss of faith. His spine is twisted, raising his shoulders and bowing his head, as if he is cringing from the burdens of life. His long graying hair is wiry, like an old broom. After two many vigorous scrubbings, his skin has become mottled and leathery.

Lian wears worn woolen suits with a threadbare paisley vest and graying cotton shirts with no cravat. His large eyes are sunken in his grizzled face, and small spectacles balance on his hawkish nose over his thin, pursed lips. One feature never fails to escape notice:



Min'kins

MIN'KINS

His long, thin fingers are constantly in motion, as if they had a life of their own. He smells of sage and a hint of formaldehyde.

Background

The fourth son of seven, Lian always wanted to help others. In his youth, he joined the Brothers of the Bountiful Light and became a healer. True to his faith, he went wherever the brotherhood sent him, and they sent him to war. The horrors of battle weighed heavily on him; his faith eroded and he turned from the light.

After resigning from the brotherhood, Lian became obsessed with creating life rather than destroying it. He began to study arcane science to further his goals. In Mordent he found a copy of Victor Mordenheim's treatise on the "Enigma Vitae" and began his experiments to revivify moribund flesh.

Lian's work continues there today. His studies have isolated him from his community, but who needs people when he has his research? Lian is so focused on recreating life from dead flesh that he is blind to the moral issues. He is not disturbed by the little "accidents" that occur when one of his creations becomes violent. This is the price of science.

Personality

Lian is the ultimate scientist, studying the forces of life and death with a great passion. He is obsessed with creating life—or a mockery of life. But he remains detached from the morality of his research, never questioning that while he can create life—should he?

Lian is distracted by his studies, always fixated on solving the next problem. He lacks social skills. He is brusque, detached, and lacks diplomacy, so others perceive him as rude and unfeeling. He possesses the traits of an absentminded professor, always talking about his studies.

Combat

Lian is not a fighter. He prefers to let others fight for him—especially his golemites. He gives in to bullies if he can avoid being hurt in the process. He uses *imbue with spells* to prepare his champions to fight his battles with spells such as *entangle*, *magical stone*, and *shillelagh*. If pressed into battle, he casts the spell *armor* on himself, and then uses spells such as *hypnotism*, *irritation*, and *hold person* to escape.

Lian's Creations

Min'kins are taxidermy nightmares, odd composites of flesh and bone—a pair of hands attached to a head, for example. They are stitched together, revived, and imbued with rudimentary intelligence. There are several basic shapes, but Lian likes to make each creation

unique in some manner. Min'kins are able to sense things even if they lack eyes, ears, or noses. Those with facial features display more personality, however, compared to the more common ones, which may be mistaken for emotionless automatons. Yet the min'kins without apparent sensory organs often discern things best, for their manifested senses are heightened beyond human ranges.

Personality: Min'kins have an ape- or childlike intelligence at best, but they exhibit some behavioral traits from any brain they inherit. Most are obedient yet skittish, cowering when whipped. They become violent if they must defend themselves. While initially faithful, like all golems, a min'kin has an evolving personality. Dependence gives way to wariness. In time it will resent and hate its creator and master.

Combat: Each min'kin has its own style of combat depending on its limbs and capabilities. A clerk may strangle, a companion blind, while a footman uses a weapon (see below). Because of their diminutive size, min'kins do not usually stand and fight, preferring to use hit-and-run tactics.

Min'kins—"Handymen"

Neutral Evil

Armor Class	7	Str	11-16
Movement	3-15	Dex	10-15
Hit Dice	1-3	Con	13-18
Hit Points	1 HD: 4 2 HD: 6 3 HD: 9	Int	1-3
		Wis	4-6
		Cha	0-3
THACO	1-2 HD: 19 3 HD: 17	XP	1 HD: 270 2 HD: 420 3 HD: 650
Morale	13		
No. of Attacks	1 HD: 1; 2 HD: 2; 3 HD: 3		
Damage/Attack	1 HD: 1d3+1; 2 HD: 1d4+1; 3 HD: 1d6+1		
Special Attacks	Nil		
Special Defenses	Does not breathe; immune to disease, gas, suffocation, toxins, and mind- and life-affecting spells; +4 to saves against physical damage; +1 or better magical weapon to hit		
Special Vulnerabilities	<i>Blessed</i> pitchfork or spear; fire; acid; zeitgeber		
Magic Resistance	Nil		

Clerk: This creature has a head plus some means of writing—perhaps a pair of hands or a long spine with a hand attached at the end. Clerks serve as scribes, but may gain dangerous intelligence (11-16) and spellcasting or psionic powers.

Companion: This min'kin comforts a human. Made for cuddling, it has expressive eyes, a nose, small arms or paws, and perhaps a tail, all attached to a pudgy little body with no legs. It can coo.

Dove: Created to deliver messages, a dove is constructed to be fast, melding human and animal parts. It has ears and a mouth, and may sport a single eye, attached to one or two pairs of legs, or hawk wings and talons. It may be able to talk.

Footman: These min'kins have two gangly legs and hips with no torso. Two stubby arms, each with two opposable fingers, are attached at the hip. Footmen may have ears or eyes. They serve as attendants.

Handmaid: This min'kin is a pair of arms attached to an upper torso, with animal ears. It performs tasks requiring manual dexterity and can walk on its hands.

Ox: A beast of burden, the ox carries loads on its broad, headless torso attached to four powerful legs.

Construction

The first min'kins were made from the bodies of animals. While they were given life, they were mostly mindless lumps. But those experiments taught the artificer which sections of the brain controlled certain body parts.

Lian's first experiments with human flesh occurred when his loyal servant, Eam, died. Using his skills, Lian built three min'kins: headman, a face on a set of rib-legs; penman, a scribe with right arm and ears; and domo, a crawling claw and left arm. Each min'kin has just enough brain to control its functioning parts and respond to commands. Over time, the fragment of brain tissue regenerates into a small brain of its own, even manifesting sensory organs where none were before.

Min'kins feed on a protein broth brewed by Lian, since most do not possess mouths or full digestive tracts. Experiment has shown that soups, purees, and even blood can be substituted for this broth.

Zeitgebers: Each min'kin has a unique form of zeitgeber, a special stimulus to which its mind reacts. You decide what each creature's cue is—music, fire, Lian? In brief: young min'kins pause or flee 1d3 rounds; at early independence, they flee or suffer a -2 penalty to all actions; at full independence, they go berserk, gain a +2 attack bonus, and a -2 AC bonus.

WANDERING HANDS



The tale of Lian's "handy things" is presented as a continuing saga with several chapters. Each one re-introduces Lian and his evolving golemites, then requires the heroes' help to overcome a danger and save lives. Unfortunately for the heroes, with each solution they will create future adventure. The saga works best as a series of intermittent events played over a lengthy period.

While this adventure is set in a village in Mordent, it may be located in any domain with a European flavor. It suits characters of all levels, but works best with mid-

level heroes. The heroes will discover that not all min'kins are foes, though all have the potential to become dangerous.

Adventure Setup

Idlethorp is a small hamlet at a crossroads in the shire of Mordent. The townsfolk are suspicious of strangers and will be evasive. Idlethorp's natives have a lazy attitude, preferring to watch others do all the work. They don't pry into another's business, and expect others to respect their privacy. Once a stranger becomes a neighbor, they will become tolerant, if not friendly.

Lian has lived in Idlethorp for five years, in a small manor overlooking the village. He keeps to himself, only visiting town for occasional supplies and livestock. The townsfolk still treat him as a stranger. Common gossip is that he is a scientist, artist, or sage who studies strange and exotic creatures. This is the result of visitors reporting that there are all sorts of bizarre stuffed animals displayed in his home. These were taxidermy experiments to knit the flesh of disparate creatures together.

The Adventure Begins

The heroes have been on the road for days. Their weary journeys lead them to a tiny hamlet nestled in the hills beside a small stream and pond. Sketch out the village of Idlethorp using any existing village from your campaign as a springboard. Consult "People and Places in Idlethorp" at the end of the adventure as you work.

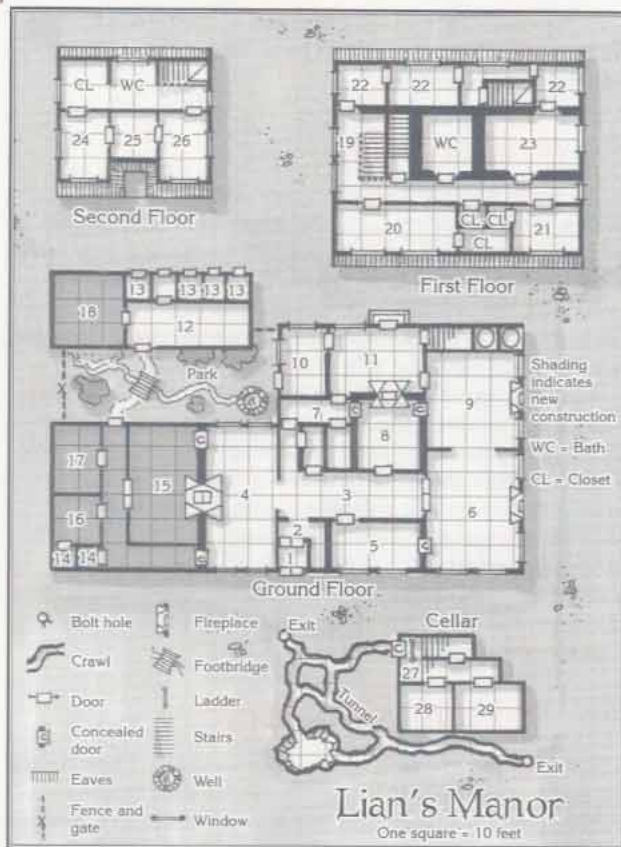
The weather is rough as the adventure begins. The sky threatens a violent thunderstorm and lightning dances in the distance, drawing closer with each minute. There are small signposts on the road leading to a village named "Idlethorp." The heroes find that there is no room at the inn, and the townsfolk will either not answer their doors, or will be hostile toward strangers. One suggests they seek shelter at Lian's manor.

On a hill overlooking the hamlet's main street is the artificer's manor surrounded by a tall stone wall. The gate is well lit with glowing orbs (*continual light*) held in the mouths of stone imps. There is a sign on the gate directing visitors to ring a bell attached to an iron post.

The storm will intensify as they approach the gate. Lian won't answer till the heroes are turning away in despair. Then he arrives, draped in a cloak. After some discussion, he agrees to let them stay til morn.

Artificial Refuge

Lian leads the heroes up the flagstone path to his manor. The courtyard has been left untended for some time and the grass is knee high. Several burrows are hidden in the tangle of weeds. The manor is three stories tall, with a stony ground floor, while the upper stories are wood and plaster. Two gables on the front



give the illusion of a pair of watching eyes with quizzically raised brows.

He sets them before the fire in the den, 4, and brews some tea. Then he wanders off to prepare guestrooms. Consult the manor map, but ignore the shaded portions; these sections won't be built til later.

While drying, the heroes may wander the den looking at the grotesqueries. A successful Intelligence check alerts a hero that he or she is being watched. If the roll is less than half the hero's Intelligence he or she detects movement out of the corner of an eye, or finds one of the figures has been moved or is missing. A clerk, companion, and dove spy on them.

All the walls and eaves of this house are hollow and may be traveled by the handymen, entering through holes hidden in window bays, behind furniture, or through vents and chimneys. Thick walls hide human-sized secret passages, but the space within normal walls is barely passable by a small child.

Nearly every common room holds taxidermy creations, save for the kitchen, laboratory, and servants quarters. Feel free to flesh out the room descriptions. Here's a tour in brief:

The manor is entered through a double set of glass doors, 1, into an entry hall and cloakroom, 2. This opens to a hall, 3, with a small servant's passage and several doors. A paneled den, 4, filled with side tables, shelves, and a plethora of bizarre stuffed animals, lies to the north

(the concealed doors do not yet exist here). To the south are Lian's study, 5, living room, 6, library, 8, and dining room, 9. A servant's passage, 7, opens to a pantry beneath the stairs and a passage to the kitchen, 11, with stairs to the second floor. The kitchen leads to the servant's day room, 10, stairs to the cellar, and to a pair of outdoor ovens. In the backyard is a well and Lian's laboratory, 12, behind which are several cages, 13, for specimens. Panels or bookshelves hide the concealed doors in the study and library.

Areas shaded on the house are not built until "The Left Hand Offends." These include storerooms, 14, an operating room, 15, a research study, 16, and a quarantine, 17. The back yard is turned into a park, with a fountain, stream, and pond replacing the well. A solarium, 18, is attached to the lab.

The upper stories are reached by stairs to halls, 19. Other rooms include a master bedroom, 20, guestrooms, 21, 24, and 26, a music room, 23, lounge, 25, and servants' rooms, 22. There are also unfinished attic rooms filled with chests and crates.

The cellars have stone walls with three rooms: 27 holds canned food, 28 is a wine cellar and storeroom, and 29 is used for general cold storage. Behind a locked door set high in the wall in 27 is an opening to a series of crawl space tunnels. These tunnels lead to exits to the courtyard and building walls, and to an excavated room, 30, used as a hideout by the min'kins.

A Dark and Stormy Night

Once the heroes are in their rooms, Lian returns to his studies. Left to their own devices and the dark rooms, the heroes sense they are not alone, hearing movement and catching glimpses of figures dashing down halls and vanishing. After an unnerving time, the heroes see and may capture a min'kin and will likely confront the artificer.

Lian will apologize for frightening the heroes and introduce them to his pets. These include Armon the clerk, Tugs the companion, and Fetch the footman. Armon has one long arm attached to a fleshy collar with eyes, and a small hand at one end. Tugs is a grotesque monkey with a small head with eyes and large ears, a pair of childlike hands on stubby arms, and short legs with no feet that it wraps around its master's neck. It tugs and signs to communicate. Fetch has a pair of gangly legs and hips with short arms attached. A pair of ears and eyebrows, but no eyes, and a thick-lipped mouth form a face set in the hips.

Lian explains his story, an eager light shining in his eyes when he speaks about his quest to create life rather than destroy it. Lian will emphasize how the min'kins have made his life easier as companions and loyal helpers. The superstitious villagers would likely fear them because they don't understand the min'kins value. The heroes should be put at ease. Lian will reveal that one of his "children" has gone missing. Eventually the heroes should retire to bed.

In the Town

The next day, the heroes may head into town to resupply. Though the townsfolk are more courteous, most are curt with strangers as a rule. Only three individuals would befriend the heroes: *Stubbs* the one-armed butcher, a war veteran; *Kriss*, a lame woman in a wheelchair who tends the boardinghouse; and *Kildear*, the deaf son of the cabinetmaker. The heroes can meet them on the street or in a shop, and will find them helpful and positive. Each has a helper who is contrastingly rude: *Ilias*, a bully; *Mirrim*, a crotchety old lady; and *Cally*, a younger sister. These three are tired of helping their companions and take it out on others.

During their day in town, the heroes should learn that the townsfolk distrust magic and wizards. They believe the town is plagued by a spirit, brownie, or imp who steals things and causes accidents. Some report seeing a monstrosity scuttling about the backyards.

One hero should meet *Ilias* the bully privately. He will act like a friend and will try to learn where the heroes have been. He will warn that *Lian* can't be trusted; the artificer is obviously a wizard and responsible for the spirit in town.

Murder Most Foul

That evening an alarm bell is rung, bringing the villagers running. *Jules the moneylender* is found dead in his home, with his head caved in, his money stolen. *Ilias* says he heard a commotion and *Jules'* cry for help. He broke into the locked house and found *Jules* murdered. He says he also found the murderer and trapped the thing beneath an overturned coffer on a table. If the heroes look, they find a min'kin formed from two hands joined at the wrist, with one winking eye at its center. The thing tries to flee, walking on fingertips. It covers in *Ilias'* presence.

Ilias stirs up the crowd, claiming that this beast is *Lian's* creation. He tries to rally the villagers into a mob, but the constable calms them and tells the folks to go home. The mob disperses. After an angry outburst, *Ilias* leaves—and quietly begins to regather the mob.

A Disturbing Clue

Several things should seem suspicious to the players. One, the min'kin is not capable of holding a weapon and striking from above. Two, if the thing was caught, where is the money? If the heroes search the room, they find an empty birdcage behind some furniture.

Ilias is the guilty party. He caught the min'kin when he tried to burglarize the artificer's place. He coerced it to obey him with a lash (there are scars on the beast). The min'kin would crawl in windows or down chimneys and open the door. When *Ilias* decided to go for the gold, *Jules* unexpectedly returned, and a panicked *Ilias* hit him too hard and killed him. If the heroes are

looking for conclusive evidence, they will find two bags of 1,000 gp hidden beneath *Ilias'* bed in the shed behind the butcher's house. They will also find an abused cat.

When the heroes confirm *Ilias'* guilt, *Kildear* will come running and gasp out that the mob has regathered and is marching on the artificer's place to lynch *Lian*!

Mob Justice

The heroes must rush to the artificer's to try to stop the mob and expose the true criminal. The heroes will arrive just in time to find the mob about to lynch *Lian* and torch his place. They must gain the attention of the angry crowd and delay the destruction long enough to reveal what they have deduced. *Ilias* will try to harm *Lian* unless restrained.

The heroes must show their evidence and convince the mob of their conclusions. The constable will arrest *Ilias* for murder. Still, the crowd will want to destroy *Lian's* home and creations. *Lian* attempts to explain the usefulness of his min'kins. If the heroes think of it, they can propose the substitution of min'kins as aides for their three handicapped friends. If not, the DM can have one of the villagers figure this out.

Thankful Departure

Ilias is placed in the custody of Constable *Helspont* until he can stand trial. *Lian* is grateful to the heroes. The townsfolk are ashamed for having nearly lynched an innocent man. Their neighbors' new handymen servants fascinate them, and these three will become the center of attention. In a few days, the richer folk approach *Lian* to make handymen for them.

Once in private with the heroes, *Lian* will insist on giving them a reward. He doesn't have much, since he uses all his money for his research, but he has a *potion of extra healing* and a small mahogany chest that the heroes can sell in a larger city for 500 gp. *Lian* makes the heroes promise to visit him whenever they return to the region.

THE LEFT HAND OFFENDS



his episode introduces a murderous element to min'kins.

Time passes, and the heroes return to *Idlethorp*. On their arrival, things will at first seem normal. But, just as the heroes grow comfortable, a min'kin appears to aid a towns-woman. She is delighted by the heroes' bemusement and orders the min'kin around.

If the heroes stay in town, the merchant *Gelt Senloss* and his aide, *Toks*, arrive after they do. These two are discomforted by the min'kin, until they see how

obedient one is. Then they whisper to each other about opportunities.

In the morning, the heroes discover there are min'kins all over the place, helping villagers with their tasks or dogging their steps. It is bizarre how casually the townsfolk accept these monstrosities. The most notable aspect of life in this hamlet is that the townsfolk have become lazy—relying on min'kins to perform the most demeaning labors. These handymen have a cloying odor of preservative.

If this is a return trip, Stubbs, Kriss, and Kildear (from the previous episode) welcome them. They speak about how life has changed in the village. Even these three take their min'kins for granted.

The heroes should witness a handyman stumble. Its master swears and kicks it, and a part of the beast falls off. The min'kin is put in a cart to wheel to the artificer.

News in town is that since the heroes' last visit, Ilias has been convicted and will be executed this week.

Meeting an Old Acquaintance

The artificer, Lian, has gained much status thanks to his golemites, and he continues to create new helping hands. But Lian is not happy, for his min'kins fall to pieces in weeks as the flesh mortifies. Lian has fixated on finding a lasting solution to prolong their life. When the heroes visit the artificer they find the manor is well tended and has had some new additions. Refer to the map. Shaded areas indicate new construction.

Karls, the artificer's assistant, will answer the door. He speaks slowly and has a lazy eye. His left hand is crippled and clawlike. Lian is pleased to see the heroes, but is busy trying to solve the problem of min'kin decay. Lian may let Karls give them a tour of the manor.

While the heroes are chatting with Lian, the merchant Senloss stops by for a visit. He outlines a business proposal to the artificer. If Lian can solve the obsolescence issue, Gelt believes there is a market for his creations in other villages. Lian says he just doesn't have the raw materials needed to meet the merchant's desires. But, Lian has an inspiration; perhaps the problem is that he is building his min'kin from the aged and decrepit. It's a shame he doesn't have younger, more vital flesh. The merchant leaves.

The Hand of Justice

In town the next day, Ilias is hanged. Make sure the heroes have a chance to see him beforehand. He limps as he walks to the gallows, rubbing the scar beneath his right eye. Everyone with a strong stomach turns out for the event. Though Lian is nowhere about, Gelt watches with curiosity, chatting with Mayor Euless. If Ilias knows the heroes and sees them, he tries to attack, shouting, "This is all your fault!" His final words: "I'll dance on all your graves!"

A New Beginning

The heroes receive an invitation several days later to view Lian's newest creations. There are three. One is a limping footman with the hooves of a goat attached to human legs and the claws of a wildcat, called *Kit*. It has a snaggle-toothed mouth set in its hips. One is comprised of a set of shoulders with attached arms and blunt-fingered hands, named *Pinch*. Last is a mouthless head and spine mounted on a pair of feet, the toes separated to make a pair of hands, called *Scar*, for the mark beneath its right eye.

Senloss, the merchant, arrives during the visit and takes possession of this trio. He provided parts and is going to take one to another village for possible sale, while his good friends, the mayor and grocer, test the others. Lian protests, but the merchant has already paid for his creations. Lian will not let the heroes interfere.

Things Get Out of Hand

If the heroes do not leave town or follow the merchant, Lian will send a summons to the heroes and confess that his new min'kins were made from Ilias' body. His studies show that in time the original personality reemerges, and this could be bad. He encourages them to pursue Senloss.

On the road, the heroes find an overturned wagon. There are signs of struggle and a smashed cage lies nearby. A trail of someone crawling leads into the grass. Following the trail the heroes find Toks, dead. He has been strangled.

Beneath the wagon is Senloss. He will not call out until he is certain Pinch has not returned. He will be incoherent at first, but will calm down and tell how the min'kin broke free and attacked Toks. He believes the thing is headed back to town seeking revenge. He pleads with the heroes to help stop it before it's too late. He can tell them where each min'kin is: Scar is with the mayor, Kit is with the grocer, and Pinch may be looking for the heroes.

In the Grip of a Murderer

The heroes reach Idlethorp at sunset. They must find the three golemites and stop their killing spree. Most of the locals will be too scared to help, and those who do will end up slain by the beasties. The heroes' three friends will survive through the aid of their own handymen, though their min'kins are damaged. Here are planned events:

- Scar slays the mayor's servants (one is strangled, one fell off the stair landing) and is hunting the mayor, scuttling across the floor from cover. It will flee the first encounter after dealing some damage. For its second attack, it will drop from a drape or chandelier overhead. Its final attack will be to trap

the heroes in a room and then attack from the clutter of furniture. The heroes may try to catch Scar or lure it into the furnace in the basement. If not cornered, it will flee to find Lian.

- Kit slays the grocer and his family, except for the son and his girlfriend. They have locked themselves in the cold cellar and have about two hours of air left. Kit has slain using various implements from the general store: one is strangled with a harness, one is impaled on a pitchfork, one is a still-smoking body set alight with lamp oil, and one is crushed beneath fallen crates. Kit attacks by luring the heroes to divide and investigate false noises. It is brutal and will attack with claws, by trampling or by wielding some weapon (dmg 1d8+2). Kit can be trapped in the cold cellar, set ablaze, or crushed beneath toppled crates.
- Pinch blinds the scribe, then leaves him alive as bait. The floor and walls are soaked with lamp oil, and the barely coherent scribe has a rope tied around his waist connecting him to a lamp on the mantle and the chandelier overhead which has four candles. If the scribe moves toward the heroes, he will pull the lamp onto the floor. If the rope is released, it will cause the chandelier to crash. Either action sets the building on fire, surrounding the heroes with a wall of flame (use *wall of fire* spell effects). Pinch then flees to seek Lian.

If a min'kin escapes, it may create random terror. It may hang someone from the church bell rope, set a building on fire, spook horses, drown someone in a horse trough, and so on. It may assist its kin to flee with a distraction.

Head of the Gang

This final showdown ends with a hunt in the artificer's labs. Posse members are killed one by one, with Scar sending benign min'kins to confuse the situation. Lian locks himself in one of the cages in back. Karls is not so lucky and is hunted by Scar. Lian has discovered the zeitgeber stimulus, and can use it to lure the thing to the operating room, 15. There's a pit of acid in one corner. Scar may be thrown into it or drenched.

Forgiveness

The townsfolk learn from the merchant why these new min'kin went on a killing spree. Senloss agrees to pay restitution and will even pay Lian to replace the townsfolk's min'kins. In private, Lian tells the heroes that once the town's min'kins are repaired, he will never make any new ones.

When the heroes leave town, if they stop by Lian's they encounter a min'kin they have never seen before. It should possess some feature of the slain Karls.

Recurrence

Below, two possible episodes carry on the saga.

High Price of Help: The heroes return to find Idlethorp filled with handymen and lazy folk. Lian is missing, and the corrupt merchant lives in his manor. He says Lian went mad. The heroes are framed for a crime and hunted by a posse. The merchant pretends to help them flee—but kidnaps them and takes them to a cave.

In this underground labyrinth, Lian is held hostage, forced to make alleged "criminals" into min'kins. (The heroes must figure this out.) He and the heroes lead some min'kins against their captors. But the min'kins turn violent in the end and corrupt their comrades in town. The heroes must end the chaos and bring the merchant and his four-armed oxen to justice. Lian departs in shame.

Homebody: Word reaches the heroes that Lian has died, strangled by a mysterious assailant. They inherit his house, where the last of Lian's handymen are hiding. They are mad with grief over his death and stay out of sight. It will take days to sort through Lian's estate, and the heroes will have brushes with the min'kins, never seeing them, but feeling that something is watching and that the house is haunted. The handymen are led by the headman. They try to drive the heroes away, or cause them injury: tripping them in treacherous situations, throwing things, setting off traps, locking doors, and more. Eventually the heroes begin to hunt the pests through the secret passages and rooms and must defeat the headman. In the end, the house is set on fire and the heroes find evidence that Lian kept a second set of notes that are now missing.

And on it goes. If the heroes don't find and stop the artificer's successor, things may really get out of hand.

People and Places in Idlethorp

Use the following list to flesh out random encounters in town. Characters noted by name during the adventure also appear below.

ARTIFICER'S MANOR—See Lian Punchinel.

- Karls (m-W3; NG) quiet, friendly, speaks slowly.
- Cook (f-0lv1; N) argumentative, territorial, adores flattery.
- Caretaker (m-F3; CH) talkative, superstitious, drinks.
- Housekeeper (f-0lv1; NG) shy, retiring, loves dolls.

BUSINESSES—Various enterprises. See furnishings and wares at prices listed in the *Player's Handbook*.

Apothecary (1 story wood) herbs, drugs, surgery.

- Physician Samuel Hotath (m-0lv1, NG) suspicious, caring, lean.
- Elene Hotath (f-0lv1, CG) gossip, nosy, ingratiating, fat.

Baker (1 story clay) breads and sweets; two ovens out back.

MIN'KINS

- Theowald Erksum (m-0lv; CN) lazy, fat, irritable, likes sweets.
- Basketry & Pottery** (1 story clay) clay kiln, separate shed.
- Enoch Platte (m-0lv; N) angry weaver, hot-tempered, snide.
- Emma Platte (f-0lv; NG) friendly potter, jolly, forgiving, loud voice.
- Blacksmith** (1 story wood) stables horses, corral, smithy.
- Stetton Malak (m-F7; LG) brusque, growls and grunts, bullheaded.
- Erin Malak (f-0lv; NG) small, calming, frenetic energy.
- Mykel Malak (m-0lv; CG) inquisitive, annoying child.
- General Store** (2 story wood) general dry and leather goods.
- Elliot Bahd (m-0lv; CN) shrewd, price gouges.
- Shirri Bahd (f-0lv; N) critical, harasses customers to pay more.
- Baris Bahd (m-0lv; CG) courteous, meek, fears parents.
- Hollee Bahd (f-0lv; LG) pleasant, shy, lisps, very nimble, clever.
- Kharn and Rast (m-T2; N) brutes, one smokes, the other bullies.
- Merchant Warehouse** (2 story wood) shipping and wagons.
- Gelt Senloss (m-T8; N) greedy, sly, devious, ingratiating.
- Toks Senloss (m-T3; CN) thoughtful, clever lackey, devoted to Gelt.
- Artur and Skell (m-F5; LN) brash, bold, vicious.
- Tavern & Inn** (3 story stone/wood) drink, meals, and lodging.
- Terry and Lori Schmaltz (m/f-0lv; CN) garrulous innkeepers.
- Katrina and Robbin (f-0lv; CG) giddy bar wenches.
- Garrett, Kalos, Shettle, and Lins (m-F2; N) wary of strangers.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES—Public property of this hamlet.

- Church** (2 story wood + steeple) doubles as school; legend of a ghostly sexton who roams the balcony and halls at night.
- Solomon Grant (m-P7; LN) power-hungry, strict, domineering.
- Seth Deveil (m-T4; CN) crazy old caretaker, sullen rogue.
- Commons** (1 story wood) this well tended greensward is the town's park and boasts a small gazebo with a raised stage.
- Molath Puckett (m-F3; N) methodical, plodding, groundskeeper.
- Constable & Gaol** (1 story stone) squat, durable.
- Constable Hespont (m-F7; LN) level-headed, seeks wealth.
- Ezra Platte (m-F4; LG) garrulous, friendly, naïve deputy.
- Town Hall** (3 story stone) vast cellar, doubles as town's fort. Has a well and an escape tunnel that leads into the woods. City council is comprised of mayor, scribe, baker, innkeeper, priest.

Town Well (10' wide, 60' deep) cut into rock.

FARMS—Small farms provide food and livestock for the hamlet.

- Butcher** (1 story clay) raises pigs, ducks, geese and fishes.
- Stubbs/Armon (m-F9; LG) crusty old man, curt, grandfatherly.
- Ilias Durkel (m-T6; NE) seems nice, but a bully, cheat and thief.
- Shepherd** (2 story wood) raises sheep, goats, and dogs; shears wool and weaves cloth, blankets, and rugs.
- Mannik Heppelmeir (m-0lv; NG) awkward, tongue-tied, honest.
- Sharen Heppelmeir (f-0lv; NG) frightened, strong, hard worker.

RESIDENCES—Homes for townfolk with some businesses.

- Banker** (3 story stone/wood) richly furnished, servants.
- Jules Cornwall (m-0lv; LN) businessman, miser.
- Troafi Cornwall (f-0lv; CN) beautiful, but dim, vain, and snobbish.
- Suzan Tinkler (f-0lv; NG) practical, focused on duty.
- Heather Schatz (f-0lv; N) timid, fidgets, easily bossed around.
- Boarding House** (3 story wood) ten rooms, meals served.
- Kriss/Fetch (f-0lv; LG) friendly, grandmotherly, in wheelchair.
- Mirrim (f-0lv; N) crotchety old lady, with an opinion about all.
- Carpine, Lestra, Nat, Hawthorn (m-0lv; N) local workers.
- Cabinetmaker** (1 story wood) also serves as undertaker.
- Irvine Platte (m-0lv; N) respectful, honest, polite craftsman.
- Magda (f-0lv; LN) protective mother, with a fearful streak.
- Kildear/Tugs (m-0lv; NG) deaf son, anxious to please and help.
- Cally (f-0lv; N) younger sister, bossy, flirts, self-centered.
- Mayor's House** (2 story brick) dark and officious.
- Mayor Saul Eules (m-F7; LN) pompous oaf, self-serving.
- Revka Eules (f-0lv; N) haughty, flirtatious, snob.
- Veniol Lox (m-F2; CG) perfect valet, loves fine things.
- Harmony Notts (f-0lv; NG) pretty, demure, affair with mayor.
- Tailor** (1 story wood) also takes in laundry, runs a bath.
- Silas Taylor (m-0lv; CN) quiet, little man, sees all, no opinions.
- Evangeline Taylor (f-0lv; CG) pleasant, helpful, but no self-esteem.
- Scribe** (1-1/2 story wood) also an accountant and diviner.
- Tomas Reilly (m-0lv; LN) quiet, never thinks for himself.

TRANSIENT GOLEM

"You . . . must not count on your reality as you feel it today, since, like that of yesterday, it may prove an illusion for you tomorrow."

—Luigi Pirandello

BIOGRAPHY



ften there are stories of golems that curse life and those who thrust it upon them. This sad creature of mist simply craves to live at all, as something more than semi-sentient air and water. Only in corporeal

form can it feel physical sensations and human emotions. Only in corporeal form can it reason and remember. Sadly, the transient golem acquires substance only by stealing life from others, and the too, too brief hours of its conscious existence fade away if it does not steal again and again and again.

This unusual golem may exist as a single, unique creature, or it can become a kind of RAVENLOFT monster, depending upon your interests and on the adventurers' handling of the story outlined below.

Appearance

In its natural form, the transient golem is virtually indistinguishable from mundane fog as well as the notorious Mists of Ravenloft. People and creatures with sensitive noses (your call!) sometimes detect a slight tang of hot copper in the air when they inhale the monster (give them 2 in 6 chance, with a +1 bonus for actively sniffing). But even the scent may fade as the creature instinctively blends with the surrounding mist, drawing thin or coalescing to match the thickness and visual texture of its cover.

When empowered by the essence of any living creature, the transient golem takes on that creature's form and appearance. Whether a wolf, a hero, or some other living thing is drained, the golem becomes a perfect twin. Even clothing, armor, and weapons are duplicated, although they are merely solidified mist and possess little or none of the physical or magical qualities of the original items. The golem can dissolve at will, but it rarely does. Instead it waits until it has exhausted the energy drained from its host, and it has no choice. The sight of this transformation requires a horror check: The creature diffuses from the outside in. First, the outer layer of skin becomes translucent and swirls away, then the inner layers of skin dissolve, followed by the muscles, the skeleton, and finally the internal organs. This six-second process is excruciating to the golem, and the agony is horribly apparent to those who look upon it.

Transient Golem

Neutral

Armor Class	10	Str	Varies*
Movement	3	Dex	Varies*
Level/Hit Dice	Nil	Con	Varies*
Hit Points	Nil	Int	Varies*
THACO	Nil	Wis	Varies*
Morale	20	Cha	Varies*
No. of Attacks	1	XP	650
Damage/Attack	1d10×10% of victim's hp		
Special Attacks	Infusion; system shock; sustain current form		
Special Defenses	Impossible to attack in natural form; Mist summoning		
Special Vulnerabilities	Abjuration/protection magic; turned as "special" zeitgeber		
Magic Resistance	100% (except against abjuration/protection magic)		

*Varies with form taken.



Transient Golem

TRANSIENT GOLEM

The statistics above describe the golem in its natural state. In this vaporous form, it shares several qualities of the geist (see *MONSTROUS COMPENDIUM Appendix III: Creatures of Darkness*): No form of attack, physical or magical, can harm the golem, because its essential spark of life resides in a phylactery-like crystal, lost in the Mists. Its Armor Class is 10 for the purpose of striking at it, but no harm results. Also like the geist, the transient golem has no level or Hit Dice, hit points, or THACO while in natural form.

In physical form, the golem retains its Armor Class of 10, but it is now vulnerable to all forms of attack. Moreover, the transient golem functions as a 0-level character unless its special *mimic* ability manifests. (See the "Extraordinary Abilities" section, below.)

Infusion: The golem's parasitic drain of a living host is called infusion. Quick and insidious, it requires no assault, and while detrimental to the host, it is not overtly hostile. Like the odem (also see the MC *Appendix III*), a transient golem can simply enter any orifice of a living creature that is accessible to air. The action requires a single round, and the creature automatically wins initiative. Once the infusion has begun, protective magic is too late; only expulsion magic cast in the same round as the entry can prevent the ensuing drain of energy.

In round two, the transient golem absorbs 1d10×10% of the host's current hit points. It always drains a minimum of 5 hp, so the victim's hit points may drop below 0. (This mechanic works best if 0 hit points is not considered the point of death.) The infusion often kills 0-level creatures and the weak, but the trauma also has a severe effect upon tougher hosts who lose half their hit points or more. They must make a successful system shock roll or lose 1 point from each ability score for 1d4–1 days, due to the immense and sudden strain of the theft. In any event, the victim at least blacks out for 1d4+1 rounds following the attack.

In round three, the transient golem flees the host's body and moves off to safety. The flight is obvious, for the golem's color has changed to crimson. In a single round, it can assume the physical form of the host it has drained, possessing the hit points it took. The creature burns these points like fuel at the rate of 1 per hour. As described above, when the golem exhausts its supply of hit points, or if it loses those points to sustained damage, it reverts to its mist form until it can find another host. Note that the crimson mist can be physically attacked and damaged just like the solid form it takes.

Sustain Current Form: Once the transient golem has assumed a physical form, it can maintain that form indefinitely by absorbing more hit points before its current supply is exhausted. It can render itself partly insubstantial and reach into a living creature to steal more energy, yet keep the physical form it has already assumed. The theft is so swift and subtle that the golem can do this in a crowd without anyone noticing,

including the victim (who unexpectedly suffers a seizure and passes out a moment or two later).

Special Defenses: As mentioned, the transient golem is invulnerable to attack, physical or magical, while in its natural state. Furthermore, the creature cannot be detected except by a *detect magic* spell, which reveals the presence of *something* (conjunction/summoning magic) in the air.

In its adopted physical form, the transient golem can leave the Mists at will, but it can silently call to them and make them rise thickly within 1d4 rounds—or within just one round if any form of fog already exists. Once the Mists have risen, the golem can step into them and become completely and instantly obscured; treat the creature as though it were affected by an *invisibility* spell. This is an effective escape mechanism.

Special Vulnerabilities: Any spell designed to expel creatures—such as *banishment*, *dismissal*, or *dispel evil*—will drive off the mist form. Spells designed to prevent intrusion—such as *avoidance*, *globe of invulnerability*, *protection from evil*, *repulsion*, and even *sanctuary*—are effective deterrents to the golem's infusion ability. You may wish to allow other means undertaken by adventurers to repel the transient golem, especially if the solutions are clever or reasonable.

Like a mist horror, the transient golem can be turned by a 9th level (or greater) priest who presents a holy symbol. The golem is considered "special" on the Turning Undead table.

Construction

The transient golem is a creature of mist. But it also has an essential physical component that serves as the actual construct, the Created. (Without it, this unusual monster could not be classified as a golem.) The true physical vessel of the transient golem is a *crystal ball* about the size of a man's fist. It lies in the Mists, and the souls of thirteen mist horrors have been trapped within the crystal, forming the golem's critical "spark of life."

Though the reason is unclear, this *crystal ball* can never leave or be taken from the Mists of Ravenloft. (Perhaps the crystal innately attracts them.) Because the Mists seem to exist outside the boundaries of normal space, the transient golem can manifest anywhere they do. Provided the golem is within the Mists, it can summon the crystal to its feet, though it rarely does so. Of course, when it adopts a physical form, the golem can leave the Mists at will, yet they always float somewhere within 100 yards of the creature. The crystal lies within that veil, and spellcasters can use *locate object* to find it, provided they know what they're seeking.

Mental Abilities: When the transient golem assumes a physical form, the creature does not normally retain any of the host's memories or abilities, nor does it possess any consciousness of the mist horrors trapped in its *crystal ball*. The golem begins physical life much

TRANSIENT GOLEM

like a complete amnesiac; its memories go no further back than the very moment it took shape. The golem picks up the first language or languages it hears almost instantly, and it learns extremely quickly. It can understand others within a few rounds, it can speak its first halting sentence after listening to others talk for about an hour, and it can speak fluently within a day. At this rate of acquisition and retention, the transient golem can blend into most societies within a week.

Extraordinary Abilities: Each time the transient golem assumes a new shape, it has a 10% chance of adopting the abilities of that creature. Armor class, THACO, spells, proficiencies, nonweapon proficiencies, and all other salient abilities function as innate powers that work identically to those of the host. You can adjust the boundaries of the golem's acquired abilities to suit the balance and tone of your campaign.

Zeitgeber: This creature has a peculiar Achilles' heal: It cannot resist fresh blood. In its natural state, the transient golem is most attracted to any character who happens to be bleeding. In physical form, the creature cannot resist touching any open wound it sees.

Interestingly, the bleeding host experiences nothing like an infusion. There no pain whatsoever, and the contact completely closes the wound. It can even save a character's life because the golem's touch is tantamount to binding wounds, even upon a character who has suffered massive damage. Witnesses have called the results a miracle. If the golem has an appropriate form, they often believe it has the powers of a paladin.

The truth is not so rosy. While the wound is closed, no hit points have been restored. Rather, the transient golem has absorbed the character's lost hit points, represented by the flowing blood. You can simply transfer all lost hit points to the golem or roll percentiles to determine how many points from the injury at hand would actually be present in the flowing blood. If the creature is in mist form, it will assume the wounded character's appearance (after moving to a safe place, away from retribution). If it already has a physical form, the golem can use the stolen hit points to sustain its present appearance.

Background

The creator of this golem remains a mystery. (The identity has been left uncertain so you can choose someone who suits your campaign.) Scholars speculate that the creator served the likes of Azalin, Strahd von Zarovich, or some other domain lord who is obsessed with escape from Ravenloft. One thing is sure: Whoever created this being was a powerful mage. The wizard was probably seeking a way to navigate the Mists by constructing a golem made of their very fabric—a golem with which he or she could maintain a telepathic link.

This creator prepared a *crystal ball* with a *trap the soul* spell, then found his way into the Mists (probably with the aid of the Vistani) and wandered there until

encountering a mist horror, whereupon he triggered the spell and ensnared the creature. He repeated this process until he had entrapped thirteen mist horrors, then returned to his laboratory. There he cast many enchantment, illusion, and necromantic spells over the crystal, binding the mist horrors' life forces to the glass and transforming them into a single entity. The golem's first self-directed act was to summon the Mists and then infuse with its creator, absorbing his living essence (or *unliving* essence, as the case may be) and taking physical form.

The adventure to follow assumes a certain history for this golem. At first, the creature was grateful for its new life, for it loved the physical and emotional sensations that flowed through it. But the golem passed through all five stages of mental development very rapidly: feeling dependence, confusion, betrayal, contempt, and finally hatred toward its creator. The wizard prevented the golem from feeding until the very last second when he was displeased (perhaps he was a sadist), and the agony of partial diffusion quickly taught the golem that its creator was neither benevolent nor beloved. The creature called upon the Mists to steal away the crystal, and to this day the object is well hidden in their embrace. Having gained control of its own phylactery, the golem repeatedly drained the wizard until he died.

Psychology

In mist form, the golem has only one instinct: to locate a host and absorb life energy so it can attain real life. There is no evil intent in the assimilation of another's life energy, so a paladin does not detect the creature's approach, and spells that involve good and evil (other than abjuration and protection magic) have no effect upon the transient golem.

Once the creature assumes a physical form, its next instinct is self-preservation, and it will take the most direct course of action available to it to maintain its new shape. The monster also begins to accumulate experience and memories immediately, and it quickly develops sophisticated methods to sustain itself without revealing its true nature. For example, the transient golem might gain human form and then make its way to another domain, where it could set up shop as a butcher. There it could feed subtly and indefinitely on the life energy of slaughtered animals without anyone being the wiser, and it could even establish itself as a respected citizen. Such a creature would have something of a dual personality, perhaps reaching a point where it didn't even recognize what it was doing as it absorbed life energy to sustain itself—the golem would come to believe it is exactly what it appears to be.

Combat

Using its infusion ability, the golem approaches an unprotected host almost undetectably and enters the

TRANSIENT GOLEM

body. The host can feel the unwholesome mist filling his lungs, and he (or a companion) can expel the creature provided an appropriate abjuration spell is cast in that same round. Otherwise, the host is seized with searing pain throughout his or her entire body, resulting in the loss of $1d10 \times 10\%$ of current hit points (minimum of 5 hp) and a blackout of $1d4+1$ rounds. Those who lose 50% or more of their hit points must make a successful system shock roll or lose 1 point from each of their Ability Scores for $1d4-1$ days.

Characters who witness the seizure, particularly if the transient golem took them unaware, are subject to fear checks at the sight of a friend suddenly writhing in agony and then passing out. Similarly, they are subject to horror checks when they see blood-red smoke pour out of the body after the host passes out.

Once in solid form, the golem avoids combat, which certainly is *not* its forte. Until it acquires enough knowledge and memory to blend into its surroundings, it will employ brutal, ruthless tactics to sustain itself. Thereafter, it sustains itself as subtly as possible, avoiding any circumstance that might expose its true identity. Nevertheless, the golem's hunger is cold, and given the opportunity it will take as much life as it can, even if its actions result in death.

As its identity develops, the transient golem's tactics become more refined. It soon discovers regular and reliable sources of energy within the means of its species. In other words, in cat form, the transient golem might scratch a few humans for their blood at first, but it would eventually learn to hunt mice for its energy (which is a way to sustain itself without getting kicked). A human transient golem might initially attack young, weak women and children in a back alley, but eventually might become a barber trained in the art of bloodletting for health—it's less likely to draw a vengeful crowd.

Whatever the golem's form may be, its *zeitgeber* remains in effect. The mere sight of exposed blood overwhelmingly commands the creature to touch and absorb.

SMOKE AND MIRRORS



The transient golem is a creature suited to any campaign, and heroes of any level. Combat may certainly play a part in any encounter, but more often the creature seeks to disappear, to blend in, and to evade notice. That means the heroes' goal is to *sniff it out* (so to speak) and deal with the creature using brains instead of brawn. Indeed, if destruction becomes the party's goal, then reducing the golem to mist form is a futile exercise—quite likely to cost a hero $1d10 \times 10\%$ of his or her hit points in the very next round!

The encounter below introduces the creature to the party, and another short vignette follows. At the end of

this chapter you'll find a list of alternate scenarios that can be woven into any ongoing saga in the lands of Mist. Each scenario also might suggest a short, independent adventure, or provide the background of a new nonplayer character with a dark secret.

Adventure Setup

The opening encounter takes place sometime after the golem killed its creator. The creature kept the wizard's form until it fell prey to a vicious pack of wolves in the forest. It has been in wolf form ever since. As such, it doesn't know that it is anything but a wolf, and it has become a constantly hungry one at that. Because it could simply steal more life essence from another member of the pack through contests of dominance, it has become the alpha male—the leader of the pack.

Smoke

In this encounter, a pack of wolves begins to chase the heroes, eventually cornering them. The group should have a good scare along the way, but eventually they'll discover the pack's leader is no ordinary wolf: It's the transient golem. Presumably, it will die at the hands of the adventuring party, resume mist form, and then attack a member and adopt his or her form. If the heroes elude the pack somehow, you can introduce the golem in mist form later and conduct a sneak attack, but a tangle with the entire pack can offer a little excitement with a horrifying twist.

Begin the scenario when the heroes are traveling through the forest. A good place to spring the attack is when they are nearing shelter and know it. This timing may inspire a race to reach the shelter before the pack catches up. Set the scene with something like this:



You've put a lot of trall behind you today, but (insert destination) lies somewhere just ahead. Momentarily lost in the anticipation of your arrival, the group grows quiet, and all you hear is the creak and rustle of flexing leather and shifting packs. It is then that you notice the deafening silence of the forest all around you, muffling the sound of your march with its dead stillness.

In that utter quiet, the long howl of a wolf pierces the air with startling clarity.



Most likely, the heroes will ask how far away the howl sounded. Respond with gravity: "Very close." If the adventurers break for shelter immediately, read or paraphrase the next bit of player text in the context of a chase. If they pause, use it to prompt them into action.

TRANSIENT GOLEM

ues to wail and thrash in bloody anguish, its muscles slip into mist, then its skeleton follows, and finally its innards ooze wide and blow away as the howl trails into nothingness. Nothing but a whitish mist hovers and swirls where the animal used to be.

A second howl answers the first, then another, and another! Suddenly the woods are overflowing with the plaintive baying. Coming into earshot, the rustling of undergrowth warns that the pack is crashing through the woods, approaching quickly.

Quite possibly, the heroes will not run long or at all, but if you can get the party to flee, try to draw out the excitement. Seed the encounter with recent warnings of lycanthropes on the loose if you're running a campaign—that'll make 'em run. Add as many wolves as needed to intimidate the party, but don't hem them in so they have to make a stand. Leave the way ahead clear. Have one or two wolves leap from the woods at their sides, giving them something to slash at and run past. Even if they miss, have the wolves leap away and temporarily lose step with them. Then bring up more of the pack behind them, within sight. Tease the heroes all the way with the notion that shelter is just ahead.

Finally, allow the heroes to catch sight of their destination, only to find it blocked by more wolves. Bring on the attack at this point. Be sure to describe the foaming mouths, the bloody teeth, the relentless lunging and leaping away, the wolves' attempts to weaken their prey. On a natural roll of 20, a wolf seizes and rends a victim's arm or leg with violent shakes of its head, not letting go until it is killed or it fails a morale roll (made after each blow struck upon it).

Dire Wolf: AC 6; MV 18; HD 4+4; hp 20 each; THACO 15; #AT 1 (bite); Dmg 2d4; SZ L (7'-12' long); ML avg (10); Int semi (2-4); AL N; XP 175.

Introduce the mist-golem wolf when dramatically appropriate. If possible, mention him stalking in the background while his pack does its work. Make no secret that he's the alpha wolf—and maybe something more—waiting for the quarry to drop. Whether he joins the battle or is struck down from afar, impart the following tale when the golem is reduced to 0 hp.

The alpha wolf howls in agony and falls to the ground, convulsing. Its cry is so horrible, the entire pack cowers and scatters. As the creature lies on its side and writhes uncontrollably, it seems to shudder so hard that it blurs before your eyes . . . but something else is happening here. . . .

The wolf's fur is dissolving away like mist, and in a moment its skin is exposed, only to fade away and expose the meat underneath. While the creature contin-

Allow the adventurers to react, and call for fear, horror, or madness checks as appropriate. But don't allow the heroes to collect themselves just yet. The situation is about to get worse. Call for the hero who slew the golem-wolf (or choose randomly) to roll 1d6 for the 2-in-6 chance to detect the golem's odor. If successful, allow the hero to react. Assuming he or she does not immediately cast an appropriate protection spell (in which case the creature simply moves to the next available host), use the following text to describe the situation.

Your lungs suddenly fill as though someone—or something—has inhaled for you. The sensation is like cold smoke forced into your lungs until they ache with the strain of holding it all, yet you cannot exhale the smoke, no matter how you try. Your body goes rigid, seemingly disconnected from your mind, and for a moment all you can think is, "It's got me, it's got me, it's me. . . ."

Frigid cold stings your fingertips numb and quickly spreads upward to your shoulders. Then the cold courses through your body, draining away something you can't quite identify, except to know that it shouldn't be lost. Then, fire! Terrible pain wrenches your entire body and you crumble to the ground, too far wracked to even scream. At last, all the feeling in your body fades, until you're keenly aware of your heart-beat, alone . . . slowing . . . quieting . . . sinking until everything goes black.

Scarlet mists billow out of your nose and mouth. They dissipate in the air and float away.

The transient golem tries to make good its escape. (Once it is out of danger, it will take the form of the host and flee the area entirely.) Meanwhile, the golem's victim is unconscious. Tell the players that this hero has fallen to the ground and lies motionless, mouth frozen in a gape of terror, then allow them to react. Sustain the mood by remaining as deadly serious as possible no matter what they do or say. If anyone checks, the hero is not dead (unless he or she had fewer than 5 hit points), but is as cold as a corpse. After the group has stewed for a suitable time, or when any spellcaster declares a healing or restorative spell, tell the affected player to roll to determine loss of hit points (1d10×10%

TRANSIENT GOLEM

of current hp, as described under "Special Attacks" above). Feel free to reveal the actual damage. Don't forget to roll for system shock if the percentage of hit points lost so dictates.

It is possible to attack and damage the golem as it exits the host in the form of bright red mist, destroying the hit points of life essence that are escaping with the transient golem. You'll have to decide whether a particular attack form affects mist. However, if stripped of its meal, the transient golem will immediately attack another member of the group and then attempt to flee again, repeating the tactic until it succeeds. If and when everyone has been drained once, roll randomly to determine whom the golem attacks a second time, and continue on—the transient golem is foremost attracted to healthy bodies, but when everyone has been tapped, one life is as good as another.

Assuming the creature escapes, the heroes won't discover its new form until the next encounter: "Mirrors."

Mirrors

Assuming the transient golem has taken the shape of a hero, the tale continues. If the heroes' shelter lies near a town that they'll visit for supplies or entertainment, the next encounter takes place there; otherwise, it occurs in the next town they visit. The golem has made its way to this place, instinctively seeking to blend into the populace. It hasn't developed much of a personality yet. Even so, the creature is quite pleased with its new form and wants to keep it, so it has been absorbing additional hit points around town, to varying reactions:

Several women and children have been attacked, and the strain has killed them. There are no reliable witnesses, but the golem has been spotted fleeing.

A cleric running a hospital and attempting to deal with the hemorrhaging of an accident victim is amazed when a mute stranger enters and stops the bleeding by passing his hands over the victim's wounds. The "miracle healer" fled the scene.

A stranger (the golem) has been taken in by a kindly widow. The character could speak only haltingly and seemed to be slow witted. He (or she) must have been a confidence artist, however, because he was overheard to be speaking quite normally, and the widow has now been found dead. The authorities have been trying to detain the stranger, but the Mists have been unusually thick, and he keeps disappearing into them.

The arrival of the adventurers, and in particular the hero who now has a double, is certain to cause confusion among the townspeople. With no way to prove his (or her) identity, the hero will be blamed for the golem's acts, and may eventually face a trial and execution. In a town full of 0-level people, it will take the golem some time to accumulate enough hit points to feel it can move on to a new home and take up a life for itself, and there is much potential for serial murder. Therefore, the scenario becomes a game of cat and mouse, with the

heroes trying to trap or chase down the golem. Its ability to call the Mists of Ravenloft and disappear into their midst should confound the heroes, especially since few adventurers would be willing to charge in after it.

Always remember that the golem is not malicious or evil (even if its spark of life is comprised of mist horrors). This tale could evolve into a simple case of "destroying the monster on a killing spree." But it becomes much more poignant if you play the golem as a tragic creature—a being trapped by its need for survival and isolated by its alien nature, desperate to find a way to live quietly and peacefully. Considering that many heroes have a penchant for solving problems with a sword, this scenario can provide some fascinating twists and turns with a creature that hates to fight.

Resolution

There are several ways to resolve the scenario:

- To kill the golem, its crystal must be located and smashed. Destroying it is easy enough (although doing so releases the thirteen mist horrors, which will not be friendly). Actually locating the crystal is the challenge. First, the heroes have to learn that it exists at all. They can do this with the help of the Vistani, through research in a wizard's library, from the lips of a sage as learned as Rudolph van Richten, or by gaining the golem's trust and listening to its story. You can make finding the crystal as easy as casting *locate object* or as difficult as undertaking a quest in exchange for critical guidance.
- To help the golem, the heroes can give it real, permanent life. This scenario is most likely if the adventurers win the golem's trust and hear its sad story. Through methods similar to those described above, the party can learn that they must secure a recently dead body, reduce the golem to mist, then allow it to take 1d4 hit points from each of them permanently. (At your option, they can regain the hit points after a certain amount of time.) The golem will then enter the dead body and animate it. Finally, the crystal must be smashed (and the mist horrors must be defeated) so that the golem can have its own life force.

Recurrence

In brief, here are two intriguing setups that can introduce another transient golem to your campaign:

- A long-time resident of a particular town has a secret; he's a transient golem. He is a wealthy meat processor who caters to several domains, a miracle-worker doctor, or a figure of authority with odd habits, and a few whispered bizarre stories behind his back.
- A transient golem is pretending to be a Vistani, calling the Mists to make its ruse convincing. The Vistani don't know who the impostor is, but they do know it is a creature of the Mists.

Children of the Night The Created

The Kargat



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