

# DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS

HORROR

## THE SINISTER SUTURES OF THE SEMPSTRESS

A LEVEL 6 ADVENTURE  
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# INTRODUCTION

**T**he *Sinister Sutures of the Sempstress* is a horror-themed adventure for *Dungeon Crawl Classics* RPG. It is intended for a group of four to six 6th-level characters and can either be played in a single session—preferably on October 31st—or incorporated into an ongoing campaign. The PCs will face off against a terrible entity seeking her revenge on the PCs for a crime their ancestors committed long ago. This entity, known in lore as the Sempstress, dwells in a pocket dimension outside the ken of humanity and is capable of striking at her foes through mundane doors and furniture. The PCs will find no solace—even in their own homes!

## BACKGROUND

**T**he Sempstress was born from mankind's subconscious fear, fashioning herself whole cloth from the terrors and phobias of a hundred cultures. She is the mother of horrors, the thing that lurks in the closet, and the fashioner of nightmares. For millennia, she tormented man and demi-humankind, feeding on their fear and blood.

A thousand years ago, a band of brave souls assembled to defeat the Sempstress and drive her deep into the cosmic netherworld. They failed to destroy her utterly, but inflicted terrible wounds that forced her to retreat into the spaces between the planes of existence. Temporarily safe, but grievously injured, the Sempstress wove a pocket dimension around her, fashioning it from physical places her power once extended to: eerie houses and abandoned structures. This small dimensional cocoon became known as the House of Tattered Remnants. She has remained in the House for the past millennium, imprisoned while she slowly regains her strength. Only recently has the Sempstress become strong enough to begin extricating herself from the House and look beyond its confines.

Her incarceration at an end, the Sempstress plans to terrorize the world once more. But first, she has a personal vendetta to pursue: the elimination of the descendants of those who entrapped her 10 centuries ago. Unfortunately for the PCs, they are part of that hated bloodline and are about to find themselves facing the fury of the Sempstress!



## THE HOUSE OF TATTERED REMNANTS

The cocoon and erstwhile prison of the Sempstress is a horrible patchwork realm known as the House of Tattered Remnants, a place pieced together from stolen rooms of the places she once terrorized and subjected to abject horror. In the thousand years she has been imprisoned there, the Sempstress has made it her demesne, populating it with her handcrafted horrors and stitched-together nightmares. Now that her incarceration is over, the Sempstress has woven pathways across the multiverse, connecting her realm with the physical plane.

These pathways can appear anywhere garments are stored, meaning doors to the House are typically found in closets, wardrobes, and chests of drawers. The common nature of these containers means the House can link to places where the inhabitants would not normally anticipate danger to appear: their very bedchamber, for example. The childhood superstition of “monsters in the closet” owes itself to nearly-forgotten cultural memories from when the Sempstress plagued mankind.

Any patchwork stalker (see below) can create a doorway between the House of Tattered Remnants and the physical world once per night. This doorway must connect to the physical world and end in a vessel, chamber, container, or similar object used to hold clothing, cloth, and/or tailoring supplies. Additionally, the object or location must be able to be closed in some manner. For example, the doorway could appear in a closet or wardrobe, but not on an open shelf where clothing was stored. The doorway to and from the House can only be employed when the physical location is shut and during the hours of darkness.

## UNRAVELING

The House of Tattered Remnants and the creatures inhabiting it are not fit for the minds of men and demihumans to comprehend. Their patchwork nature offends the eye and brain, and prolonged exposure to either the realm or its residents results in a horrible breakdown of personal realities. This process is known as *unraveling*.

Each PC can withstand a number of blows to her psyche equal to her Personality score. This mental fortitude is called *stability*. Exposure to the House of Tattered Remnant's bizarre environment or experiencing some that realm's horrors forces a PC to make an unraveling check. This is a DC 10 Will save which, if failed, causes the PC to lose 1 point of stability. Each player must keep track of her current stability. When her stability reaches zero, she has unraveled and falls to pieces like a swatch of abruptly unwoven cloth. Unraveled characters immediately vanish and are forever lost to the House of Tattered Remnants, where they likely will come under the sway of the Sempstress or be devoured by her horrors. Stability recovers at a rate of 1 point per month spent away from the House or its inhabitants.

Once a PC's stability is reduced to 10 or less (including the first time she loses stability if her Personality is normally 10 or less), each time she loses a point, her body begins mani-

festing physical signs of her deterioration, affected by the power of the House. Each time stability is lost, the judge rolls or chooses an effect from the table below. Reroll repeated unraveling manifestations.

<b>Roll 1d10</b>	<b>Unraveling Manifestation</b>
1	Tiny stitch marks appear in the PC's flesh.
2	The PC experiences double-vision as if witnessing two realities overlapping. This condition might impart a -1 penalty to delicate work like picking locks at the judge's discretion.
3	Strands of the character's hair are replaced with another substance (yarn, veins, cobwebs, etc.).
4	One of the PC's eyes takes on a doll-like appearance (a glass orb, a sewn-on button, etc.).
5	The PC's skin becomes slightly translucent, giving a clear view of the veins and arteries under her flesh.
6	Patches of skin begin peeling away, revealing what appears to be a wooden armature under the flesh.
7	One article of the PC's clothing becomes part of her body, seemingly growing from her body. It can be removed by cutting it away, but doing so inflicts 1d6 damage and 1d3 points of Stamina loss.
8	One of the PC's orifices begins peeling away from her body. An ear hangs askew, her mouth flutters like a flag when she talks, her nose is attached to her face by a few loose threads, etc.
9	The character's voice acquires a faint, ghostly echo when she speaks.
10	One of the character's limbs is replaced with a stuffed doll's appendage. Determine the limb randomly. A leg reduces speed by -10' and a -2 penalty to Agility. An arm imparts a -4 penalty to Strength.

## ADVENTURE START



*The Sinister Sutures of the Sempstress* begins at night anytime the PCs are resting safely indoors. Preferably, the adventure should begin when the characters are in their own home(s), making the invasion of their personal lives much more horrific, but starting the scenario during an overnight stay at an inn or other lodgings is also a possibility.

While the PCs are sleeping, the Sempstress dispatches her patchworks to deal with the descendants of her prisoners. The minions create pathways to appropriate places in the physical world and slip out of them, weapons in hand and intent on spilling blood.

Unless a PC is on guard duty (improbable but not impossi-

ble), the patchwork stalkers slip out of their closets and drawers and skulk to the PCs' bedsides. Each character is allowed a DC 12 Fort save. If successful, they are awakened by the soft tread of the patchworks and can roll initiative to react as normal. The patchworks gain +2 to their initiative rolls due to the PCs' groggy state, however.

Read the following:

*The soft creaking of an opening door stirs you from your sleep...or so it seems. Your eyes open slowly, their corners caked with sleep. An overwhelming sense of weariness grips your body. It is difficult to move among your bedclothes; torpor grips your muscles like rigor mortis.*

*From the corner of your eye, you spy movement in your dream. The door to the old wardrobe in the corner [or closet or chest of drawers, etc. depending on the location of the PC(s) and the room's contents] grinds open slowly on squeaking hinges. You see a hand emerge from the around the door, a hand that seems stitched together from the appendages of many. The fingers are of different hues, even different races and genders, held together with thick black threads. The tinge of gangrene lingers about the stitches.*

*A similar patchwork face appears from behind the door, revealing a rictus grin filed with long sewing needles that gleam in the darkness. The rest of this nightmare is equally grotesque, fashioned from the discarded parts of men, women, and even children, recently dead. The creature slips from the closet, lurching and scuttling across the floor, a long knife of sharpened bone in its hand. Its eyes are fixed on you with murderous intent. Thank the gods this is all just a dream...isn't it?*

**Patchwork Stalker (1 per PC):** Init +3 (+5 if PC has just awoken); Atk bone knife +3 melee (1d6+1 or 1d12+1 plus critical if sneak attack); AC 14; HD 3d6; hp 15 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP create House of Tattered Remnants doorway, sneak attack (d16/IV crit against sleeping or surprised opponents); SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +3; AL C.

Fashioned together from discarded bits of flesh by the Custodian of Parts (see area 2-3 below), patchwork stalkers are excellent assassins, inflicting horrible wounds if they take their enemies unaware. They cannot speak and fight to the death, blindly obeying their orders to kill the PCs.

## TRAVELING TO THE HOUSE OF TATTERED REMNANTS

If the PC witnessed the creature emerge from its arrival point, she knows how the creature entered the room – if not how they got into the closet, wardrobe, etc. Investigating the piece of furniture reveals nothing out of the ordinary such as secret passages or magical portal, but clothing is disturbed, dirt and blood stain the floor, and there are similar signs that the assailant originated from this place or piece of furniture. How they got in there is not clear, however.

A PC who enters the place or object housing the doorway to the House of Tattered Remnants can activate the passage (either wittingly or not) by closing the lid, door, drawer, etc., and sealing herself inside. Note that because of the weird otherworldly nature of the doorway, the PC can enter the object or place even if it would normally be physically im-

possible to fit inside. A chest of drawers housing a connection to the House could be climbed into by a full grown human. Anyone watching this can't be certain if the PC shrinks or the object grows, but nevertheless witnesses the character squeeze inside.

If the characters fail to locate the doorway inside the place or piece of furniture, the Sempstress dispatches more patchwork stalkers on subsequent nights until the PCs are slain or they venture into the House of Tattered Remnants.

Once inside the location or object with its door, lid, etc. closed, the PC feels herself pushed against the back of the object or place by an irresistible force. Read the following:

*The solid back of the closet gives way to your body as you're pressed against it. The hard surface grows soft and gossamer, bringing to mind spiders' webs and burial shrouds. There is a stink of old rotting meat and the faint buzz of charnel flies as you pass through the unsettling substance. Visions of slaughterhouses, battlefields, and potter's graves dance through your mind for what seems like decades. Then, with a soft popping noise, you emerge from the unnerving gossamer and find yourself...somewhere else.*

The PC arrives at area 1-1 of the House as described below. The passage is unnerving and unnatural, however, and the traveler must make a DC 10 Will save or lose 1 point of stability.

## THE REALM OF THE SEMPSTRESS

The House of Tattered Remnants is stitched together from physical spaces stolen by the Sempstress to form her cocoon realm. It is a patchwork of architectural styles and a visual cacophony of design. A sense of profound age and desolation permeates the House, making it an eerie place to find oneself. The House's rooms are lit by a diffuse light, like that of fading moonlight, which originates from no discernable source.

The interior of the House is by default that of a gloomy, dilapidated Victorian mansion, and should be described as such if the judges desires. However, given its weird nature, the House can easily be tailored to the game master's personal tastes and take the form of an abandoned insane asylum, a prison house, a vast mortuary, or other grim location.

The judge is encouraged to elaborate on the descriptions below—especially if doing so will better unnerve or disquiet the players (nobody knows better how to push a gaming group's buttons than the judge they play with, after all!).

**Area 1-1—Pulsing Foyer:** *You emerge from a closet, its interior reeking of rotting wood, mold, and the scent of a slaughterhouse. Outside the closet is a broad foyer with a parquet floor of dizzying geometric angles. Sliding wooden doors close off two exits on either side of the room. A shut front door stands to your left, and a staircase corkscrews itself upwards to your right. The walls are covered with faded red velvet wallpaper, torn in places. The wall behind these gaps is not lathe and plaster, but what seems to be the veined flesh of some great beast. The entire rooms pulses as if to the beat of a monstrous heart.*

Each PC must make an unraveling check (DC 10 Will save or lose 1 stability point) upon entering the House of Tattered

Remnants, their reality overwhelmed by the strangeness of the place.

The room contains no hidden dangers initially, but brash PCs might bring about their own demise. The walls behind the wallpaper are indeed flesh—warm to the touch, pockmarked with pores, and spotted with wiry black hairs. Blood is visible moving through the veins under the skin, pumping in time to the heartbeat.

Breaching the skin with a weapon or tool causes a gout of blood to erupt, spraying into the room and coating the person inflicting the wound. This causes anyone witnessing the event to make another unraveling check or lose 1 point of stability.

A few moments after the blood begins pouring from the wound, the gore animates, coagulating into an oozing creature that lashes out at those around it.

**Gore Ooze (1):** Init (always last); Atk pseudopod +4 melee (1d4 plus 1d6 acid); AC 10; HD 4d8; hp 32; MV 5' or climb 5'; Act 4d20; SP half damage from slicing and piercing weapons, acidic touch (automatic 1d6 damage to all engulfed creatures; opposed Strength check vs. Strength 20 to escape engulfment), immune to force and necromantic attacks (magic missile, chill touch, etc.); SV Fort +6, Ref -8, Will -6; AL N.

Laying hands on the wall and healing 3 or more dice of damage seals the wound and causes the gore ooze to become inert. Treat the wall as chaotic for *laying on hands* spell checks. Otherwise the ooze fights until reduced to zero hit points, at which point it dries into a gruesome scab.

The doors are all unlocked. Opening the front door reveals unnerving vistas beyond. See sidebar for more details.

**Area 1-2—The Spuppeteers:** *The staircase seems to rise an impossible height upwards, vanishing into darkness and vapor as if clouds collected above it. The stairs twist and turn upon themselves in a haphazard fashion, creating a ramshackle and jagged pathway to whatever awaits above.*

The stairs turn and dogleg, sometimes standing directly above its lower course and sometimes rising far to one side, providing a clear view upwards. The stairs connect to the second floor of the House but go no higher.

The upper reaches of the stairs are inhabited by spuppeteers, weird arachnid monstrosities. The creatures watch the party ascend the stairs from the gloom above, using their marionettes to attack the intruders and add them to their collection.

The threads the spuppeteers use to control their marionettes are so fine they are not immediately noticeable in the gloomy staircase. Only after one of the marionettes is slain, a bright light is created on the stairs, or four combat rounds pass will the party notice that each of their weird enemies is connected by strings that lead to the spuppeteers above.

**Spuppeteers (4):** Init +3; Atk bite +6 melee (1d4+1 plus poison) or knitting needle leg slash +5 (1d8+1); AC 15; HD 6d8; hp 30 each; MV 30' or climb 20'; Act 2d20; SP poison (Fort save DC 12 or lose 1d3 Personality), create marionette, im-

## LOOKING OUT OF DOORS AND WINDOWS

The House of Tattered Remnants stands adrift in the spaces between the multiverse's planes, looking out on many realms but separated from them by the magics that maintain it.

Anyone looking out the doors or windows witnesses the spectacle of other dimensions, many of which were not meant for the sight of humanity or demihumanity. Roll or choose from the table below to determine what the observer sees. Regardless of what sights she witnesses, the view forces an unraveling check.

### Roll What's Outside?

#### 1d7

- 1 A city of non-Euclidean geometry fashioned from cyclopean stone blocks hoary with age. Black, winged forms flutter in the skies above it.
- 2 A sea of blood speckled with half-drowned towers and ruined redoubts under a sky the color of a bruise.
- 3 The empty void of space. A few dying stars linger in the ebony stellar waste.
- 4 A boiling sea filled with monstrous aquatic life devouring each other in a bloody feeding frenzy.
- 5 An endless cemetery where titanic maggots swallow swaths of graveyard earth in single, gargantuan bites.
- 6 The cathedral-like stomach and intestines of a dead, rotting god.
- 7 A grim landscape filled with gibbets, gallows, plague pits, and shambling forms that feed on carrion.

Any character exiting the House is assailed by the tearing forces of these alien environments and automatically loses 1 point of stability each round they remain outside the (relative) safety of the pocket dimension.

mune to mind-affecting magic including *sleep*; SV Fort +3, Ref +8, Will N/A; AL C.

The spuppeteers appear as spiderlike creatures with eight legs fashioned from monstrous knitting needles that click as they scuttle about. Their spinnerets are like bobbins and produce a fine, nearly-invisible thread they use to manipulate their horribly transformed victims. Spuppeteer poison robs its victim of Personality, rendering them docile and drone-like. When reduced to zero Personality, the victim perishes and becomes a marionette the arachnid creature can manipulate with its webs. Personality loss from the spuppeteer venom does not affect a PC's stability score.

**Spuppeteer Marionette (4):** Init +1; Atk stab +6 melee (1d8+3); AC 13; HD 4d8; hp 20 each; MV 25; Act 2d20; SP immune to critical hits; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will N/A; AL N.

The victims of the spuppeteers were once human, but their masters' poison has both rendered them mindless and

warped their flesh. Each marionette now resembles a featureless artist's articulated model with razor-sharp blades in place of their hands. They are dressed in the ragged remains of the clothing and armor they wore in life and move with a jerkiness that belies their agility. Cutting the marionettes' threads does not immobilize the weird creatures, but they suffer a -2 penalty to all rolls when not under the direct control of their spuppeteer masters.

The spuppeteers keep their accumulated treasures in a webbed ball halfway up the stairs. This bundle contains a silver skull (50 sp value), a wax tube containing 75 gp, a dagger that coats its blade with tarantula poison once per day when the pommel is twisted, and a fetus-shaped statuette carved from jade (150 gp value).

**Area 1-3—Bloody Ballroom:** *Beyond the door is a grand ballroom. A parquet floor lies beneath a soaring ceiling adorned with delicate arches. Lines of antique mirrors, slightly blurred with age, hang on opposite walls of the ballroom. Two pairs of sliding doors face one another across the dance floor. The ballroom floor is a shambles of rotting body parts, spilled blood, and fetid gore. Nearly a dozen bodies lie here, clearly slain by violence. Bones, bits of steel, and other debris are evident among the slaughter.*

The Sempstress stages gladiatorial battles between the Custodian's various creations to pass the time during her imprisonment. The bodies are eventually recycled back into the Custodian's raw material bins (see area 2-3) or consumed by the inhabitants of the House. These slain fighters have yet to be collected.

There are ten dismembered bodies here, some still held together by thick black threads. A collection of small jagged knives, worn bucklers, and piecemeal armor adorn the corpses. Buried under the body of a particularly large patchwork specimen is a weird sword that appears fashioned from one half of a pair of oversized pinking shears. Its blade is hefty and serrated, and it is dirtied with blood and pieces of thick thread.

The sword is very effective against the sewn creatures of the House, imparting a +3 bonus to attack and damage rolls against patchwork stalkers and flesh-dresses. The sword is considered a magical weapon when wielded against other inhabitants of the House affected only by magical attacks.

The mirrors along the walls act as the mirror in area 1-5. Consult that room description for details.

**Area 1-4—The Gallery of Clocks:** *Dark wood lines the walls of this long, narrow chamber. A dingy white plaster ceiling with scalloped corners hangs overhead. Stuffed chairs and divans are positioned about, their stuffing spilling out onto the floor. Numerous clocks hang on the walls. Some have too many hands, others have none at all, and all tick incessantly and out-of-rhythm. Sliding wooden doors stand at both ends of the gallery.*

Shimmering, ghostly figures appear in the room as the party moves through it. There is one indistinct, translucent form for each party member. Each PC hears a softly alluring voice speak directly to her, inaudible to her comrades. The voices come from the apparitions. They ask, "Can you spare a moment of your time?"



Anyone agreeing to the creatures' requests experiences a momentary vision of an important event in their lives. Then, to their horror, the event begins to fade from their memory. The PC must make a DC 16 Will save to keep the creature from stealing this precious moment of past time from her. If failed, the PC forgets the memory entirely, losing any life experience she gained from that time. She immediately loses 50 XP. If the character makes her save or doesn't agree to the figure's request, it attacks.

**Timekeepers (1 per PC):** Init +2; Atk touch +3 melee (1d4 plus memory drain); AC 15; HD 3d10; HP 20 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP memory drain, stolen memories invigoration, immune to non-magical attacks; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +6; AL N.

The figures are timekeepers, bizarre entities who consume temporal energy from their victims. They siphon away the experiences of their prey, robbing the victim of sometimes momentous events in their lives. Initially indistinct and transparent, a timekeeper begins to resemble its victim the more memories it consumes from her. After three or more successful memory drains, the creature is an exact duplicate of its target. Additionally, each time a timekeeper drains a memory, it is invigorated by the stolen time and regains 1d5 hit points. Timekeepers are immune to non-magical attacks.

Anyone struck by a timekeeper must make a DC 12 Will save or lose 50 XP. If the target agrees to the creature's request to "spare a moment of your time," the DC is increased to 16 on both the initial and all subsequent attacks. If the target rolls a natural "1" on its Will save, the stolen memory is one essential to the character's life. For example, a cleric PC might lose the memory of when she first connected with her god on a spiritual level, or a thief could forget the exact moment that drove her to pursuing a life of crime. Losing it results in the

PC instantly forgetting her connection to her chosen class and she immediately becomes a zero level PC again! She loses all benefits from her class, including hit points, and is reduced to 0 XP. She must start her adventuring career over again unless a powerful restorative measure can be found.

A DC 10 Intelligence check or a player who explicitly looks for any connection between the timekeepers and the clocks notices a fine, ghostly chain connecting each creature to one of the clocks in the room. The connected clock is the timekeeper's Achilles' heel. Destroying the clock banishes the creature. Each clock is AC 13 and has 10 hit points.

Slaying a timekeeper causes all in a 20' diameter around it to be assaulted by random memories the creature has consumed during its lifetime. Most of these visions are meaningless to the bystanders. However, when the first timekeeper is slain (not banished by

destroying its clock), bystanders glimpse a scene of a band of various heroes fighting a pitched battle against a ghostly, but weirdly beautiful feminine tyrant. This is a stolen memory from the PCs' ancestors in their initial fight to imprison the Sempstress.

Each timekeeper's clock contains a jeweled matrix of clockwork pieces. These delicate, glowing jewels are worth 200 gp each. They may have additional magical properties or uses at the judge's discretion.

**Area 1-5—Mirrors are the Eyes of the Soul:** *A long corridor stretches into the distance. Wood paneling the color of rich earth lines the walls. A scarlet carpet runner extends down the length of the hallway. An old fashioned mirror hangs on the wall midway down the corridor. A door stands at the end.*

This mirror—and others like it in the House—are portals through which the Sempstress can observe her prison. She is not always monitoring them, however, and a cautious and lucky party can avoid notice.

Moving past the mirror as a group requires the PC with the best Luck score to make a Luck check. If successful, the Sempstress' attention is elsewhere and she doesn't see the party. If the party moves past the window at staggered intervals or one or more PCs spends time investigating or manipulating the mirror, each PC must make a Luck check to see if they draw the Sempstress' notice.

Drawing the Sempstress' attention causes the mirror's surface to become gauzy as if a loosely woven shroud was draped over the glass. A slender, vaguely feminine face appears behind the gauzy surface. The face then seems to become tattered, flaking skin like old paint. A vicious snarl is heard and the glass then goes dark. The face does not reappear. Anyone witnessing this must make an unraveling check.

Breaking the mirror automatically attracts the Sempstress' attention, but spares the party the need to make an unraveling roll as her face doesn't appear in the shattered glass.

Attracting the Sempstress' notice has no discernable effect, but it will make the party's final confrontation with her more difficult (see area 3-2).

**Area 2-1—Playroom:** *This room is decorated in soft pastel colors and pictures of dancing bears and cavorting felines are painted directly on the plaster walls. A carpet with the face of a jester woven into it covers the floor. An overflowing chest filled with children's toys spills its treasures across the room.*

The toys are a myriad of playthings from all eras and for all genders. Jack-in-the-boxes lie among stuffed animals, wind-up toys sit beside carved wooden playthings, and plastic dolls share space with porcelain figurines.

Anyone searching the toys notices a beloved plaything from their own childhood mixed in among the rest. Sighting the childhood treasure instantly fills them with a longing for the simpler times of their youth and they must make a DC 15 Will save. Failure means they succumb to the lure of their childhood.

Affected PCs lose 1d6+1 points from Strength, Stamina, Intelligence, and Personality as they are transformed into six year-old children. Their clothing and possessions remain unchanged. Transformed PCs are unwilling to leave the playroom, content to amuse themselves with the room's toys.

Allies can attempt to convince the transformed characters to put down their toys and come with them (right this minute!). An impassioned plea or rational argument allows the affected PC to make a second Will save at DC 10. If this save is failed, the transformation takes a firm hold over the PC and nothing short of *remove curse* with a spell check of 27+ or other powerful magic will return the character to adulthood.

If the second Will save succeeds, the affected character is able to put her childhood behind her and escape the toy's power. Doing so not only returns the PC to her normal age and restores lost stats, but solidifies her grasp of her own sense of self. She regains 1d4 stability points and loses one unraveling manifestation of her choosing.

Destroying the entrancing toy also breaks the compulsion to remain in the playroom, but does not restore the transformed PC to her adult state. The child-sized adventurers age normally but only magic such as *remove curse* or other sorcery can restore them to their adult forms.

Any toy taken from the room transforms into its true nature—a grisly piece of flesh, old bone, shriveled organ, or other disgusting piece of organic matter. The PC carrying the "toy" must make an unraveling roll upon realizing its true form.

**Area 2-2—The Salon of Skeins:** *A comfortable-looking salon with faded floral wallpaper, overstuffed chairs and divans, a woven carpet, and a dimly burning chandelier resides beyond the door. One wall of the room is covered in tiny portraits, each no larger than a man's palm. Each painting depicts a man or a woman dressed in a panoply of archaic dress styles. Thin strands*

*of red thread connect the pictures in an untidy skein of webs. An archaic mirror hangs on the opposite wall. Two additional closed doors exit the room.*

The portraits and threads depict an expansive family tree created by the Sempstress to track her enemies. The uppermost paintings are those of the heroes who originally imprisoned her in the House. Each successive portrait is that of their descendants, culminating in pictures of the PCs themselves! The threads indicate marriages and lines of descent. There are nearly two thousand portraits in total.

PCs examining the portraits quickly spy familiar faces among the images, allowing them to deduce their family trees are present (and in many cases exceed their own knowledge of their heritage), but the significance of the vast skein may be lost on them.

The mirror in this room functions identically to the one in area 1-5 and the Sempstress may become aware of the PCs' presence if she isn't already alerted to them.

Each of the paintings is worth 5 gp, but PCs can only carry 10 of them for each point of Strength they possess. If they carry more than half what their strength allows, they are encumbered and suffer a -10' speed penalty, lose any AC bonus due to Agility, and suffer a -1 penalty to all rolls requiring movement (including attacks, saves, and spell checks).

The southern door leads to a dusty, cobweb-filled flight of creaking stairs that ascend into darkness. They lead to the area 3-1.

**Area 2-3—The Custodian of Parts:** *This room is in near blackness and lit only by the glowing coals of a dying fire burning in a small hearth set at the far end of the chamber. The room is cluttered with boxes, bins, barrels, and crates, and crowded shelves line the walls. Narrow paths wind through the mess. The smell of chemicals and rot cloy the air.*

This room is the den of the Sempstress' major domo, the Custodian of Parts. It is its job to maintain Her Majesty's inventory of body parts, junk, cloth, and other components with which she creates her minions. Unbeknownst to the Sempstress, the Custodian has long harbored a hatred for its master and possesses the means to help defeat her.

A voice whispers from the darkness when the PC's enter, "Come to collect or to contribute?" The voice rattles and gasps like a dying man's last words.

Regardless of the PCs' response, a long articulated limb like a crab's leg extends out of the gloom to rummage through one of the bins, pulling out a rotten leg with its elongated fingers. The arm retracts back into the darkness.

The bins contain a horrific inventory of diseased, decaying, and severed flesh soaking in pungent chemical preservatives. Maggots float like algae atop the vile broth.

PCs moving deeper into the room glimpse the Custodian: it resembles an obese human being who has fallen a tremendous distance and pancaked onto solid ground. It is more puddle than solid form and it clings to the wall of the room like a horrible piece of abstract art. Three crab-leg arms extend out of the raw, bloody pile, elongating to reach any of





# AREA 3-2 THE HEART OF THE HOUSE



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the room's bins. A tilted mouth filled with broken teeth set in the middle of the fleshy puddle converses with the party. Seeing the Custodian requires an unraveling check.

### Dealing with the Custodian—Communicating

The Custodian questions the party if they seem open to parley, seeking information about who they are and what brings them to his workshop.

- If questioned about his identity, the Custodian informs the PCs that it is the designer of horrors for an entity known by many as the Sempstress. She once plagued many worlds, but has been incarcerated in this realm known as the House of Tattered Remnants for a millennium.
- The Custodian tells the story of the Sempstress' defeat if asked.
- The Custodian informs the PCs that the Sempstress' imprisonment is at an end and that she has dire plans for the multiverse's worlds once she is fully freed from the House.
- It doesn't know why the PCs were targeted. Knowing the Sempstress as it does, she likely has a personal vendetta against them. Could they have somehow offended or angered her?
- Questions about why it serves the Sempstress, his opinion of her, or whether it too is imprisoned are met with a disgusted laugh. The Custodian admits that it once willingly served its mistress, perhaps even loved her, but its prolonged allegiance to her has caused it to become the monstrosity it is today, its body forever altered by her weird ways and the environment of the House of Tattered Remnants. Now it wants nothing more than freedom from the House. That can only be accomplished by

destroying the Sempstress before she escapes her confinement completely.

- Any questions on how the Sempstress can be destroyed are answered with a resigned sigh and shrug of the Custodian's splattered shoulders. He admits that he once created something he called "The Bright" that would hurt the Sempstress, but he threw it away in a moment of disgust and self-loathing. He gestures with one of his long crab-like arms at the myriad ghastly containers and mutters, "It's in there somewhere...You're welcome to seek it if you desire." He describes it as an old silver broach.
- The Custodian will not directly assist the PCs, but does go so far as hint that "the root of the problem lies at the top of the house" if they declare their intent to seek out the Sempstress and confront her.

Seeking the Bright requires the characters to paw through disgusting containers filled with rotting body parts, insect pieces, terrible substances, maggots, and whatever other grotesque matter the judge conceives. The search causes all PCs to make an unraveling check as they plunge their arms into the filth. Allow each PC to make a Luck check. The one who makes their check by the largest margin eventually locates the Bright, an old silver cameo broach with the visage of an aristocratic-seeming woman on it (see Appendix A for more details).

### Dealing with the Custodian—Fighting

Brazen or disgusted PCs might choose to fight the Custodian without bothering with the courtesies of conversation. The Custodian is a powerful enemy and choosing violence may be a poor path for the party.

**The Custodian of Parts (1):** Init +4; Atk slam +7 melee (1d10+2); AC 12; HD 6d12; hp 50; MV instantaneous; Act 3d20; SP animate parts, swift movement, immune to critical hits, immune to non-magical attacks, shred corpus (automatic critical hit if successfully striking one victim with two or more slam attacks, 2d20/V crit); SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +10; AL N.

The Custodian is an ancient entity and steeped in power. It can instantly move itself anywhere inside the workshop if desired, appearing suddenly on a wall, floor, or ceiling to attack its enemies. If the Custodian strikes one opponent with two or more of its slam attack, its limbs shred the being's body, inflicting an automatic critical hit as if a 10th-level warrior. The creature can also cause the collection of spare organic parts to animate, attacking anyone unfortunate enough to be near the room's various containers.

**Animated Parts (1):** Init -4; Atk +8 melee (1d6); AC 6; HD 10d10; hp 60; MV none; Act 1d20 per PC in area of effect; SP swarm creature (20' square area), suffers half damage from

## EYEBALLS AND WITCH'S HAIR

This area provides a great opportunity for classic Halloween fun. If the PCs look for the Bright, the party must dig through the grotesque storehouse in order to find it. Rather than roll to see if they find the Bright, have them literally get their hands dirty.

Remember that old Halloween tradition of being blindfolded and putting your hands into bowls of peeled grapes while someone told you they were eyeballs? It's time to do that again. An online search for "The Withered Corpse Halloween Game" or "Halloween Feel Box" will provide you with a bounty of ideas for how to gross out your players with old-fashioned All-Hallows fun. Hide a small object representing the Bright in one of the bowls or cups and let the players actually search through the disgusting mixtures to find what they seek. Just make sure the game room is sufficiently dark or the player doing the searching is blindfolded for maximum effect..

non-area of effect attacks, can attack all creatures within its area; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will -1; AL N.

If the Custodian is slain, its death sends a shiver throughout the House. This rumbling alerts the Sempstress of the creature's demise and she will be prepared to deal with intruders as if she had glimpsed them through her mirrors (see area 1-5 above).

**Area 3-1—The Attic:** *The stairs lead to a vast, musty attic. Angled rafters support a pitched roof that slopes down around you. Dust motes drift in the air like restless spirits and the air smells of age and blood. Spun cobwebs cling to the rafters above and the ground is littered with shadowy boxes, trunks, and other forgotten objects.*

The heart of the Sempstress' prison, she has dwelled in the attic since her incarceration, her power feeding on itself in an endless loop. She has become intrinsically part of the House of Tattered Remnants and is only now just extricating herself.

Anyone examining the cobwebs notice they are tinged red and seem to throb slightly as if pulsing with life. A DC 15 Intelligence check notices the webs grow into the very substance of the House itself. These are strands of the Sempstress' corpus. Following the cobwebs guides the party to the heart of the House.

There are two major threats in this section of the attic: the flesh-dresses and the rag-bats. Both emerge from the shadows and clutter if the PCs poke about or move towards the entrance to area 3-2.

**Rag-Bats (8):** Init +3; Atk bite +6 melee (1d5+1); AC 16; HD 2d8; hp 14 each; MV 10' or 40' fly; Act 1d20; SP automatic bite on subsequent rounds, choking dust cloud (5' diameter), immune to mind-affecting magic including *sleep*; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will N/A; AL N.

Rag-bats appear to be animated pieces of dingy and dust-encrusted cloth that flit about like their namesakes. A rag-bat attacks by biting its victim with needle-filled mouths. If the bite hits, the creature latches on to the victim and automatically inflicts bite damage on subsequent rounds. After successfully biting, it batters its dusty wings against its enemy, creating a thick cloud of choking dust around the target. The target and anyone else in the area of effect suffers a -2 penalty to all attacks, spell checks, saving throws, damage rolls, and other types of random checks so long as the bat is attached to the target. Killing the rag-bat or dislodging it ends the dust cloud.

**Flesh-Dresses (2):** Init +2; Atk keening wail +5 ranged (1d8+1 plus unraveling check; 30' range); AC 14; HD 4d6; hp 20 each; MV 30; Act 1d20; SP immune to bludgeoning attacks, immune to mind-affecting magic including *sleep*; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will N/A; AL N.

Flesh-dresses appear as leathery wedding gowns, grungy with age and dust, and bearing web-like veils. The flesh-dresses are in truth made from the flayed flesh of albinos and draped atop dressmaker's mannequins. They wheel about on screeching rusty wheels and emit a keening wail that causes their veils to flutter. This wail strips not only flesh from bone, but forces the victim to make an unraveling check.







DOORS C & D CONNECTED

1-2

2-2

2-1

2ND FLOOR

2-3

UP TO ATTIC

FLESH DRESS

3-1

3-2

DOWN TO

2ND FLOOR

ATTICA

## ATTIC TREASURES TABLE

### Roll 1d6 The character discovers...

- 1 A fine purple-black cloak embroidered with silver thread skulls. When worn, it allows the PC to make a second Luck check when rolling over his body. The cloak then falls to pieces regardless of the second check's result and blows away.
- 2 A battered top hat. When worn by a wizard, it adds +3 to all spell checks involving summoning spells (animal summoning, monster summoning, demon summoning, etc.). The hat has 5 hit points and can be destroyed by mundane means.
- 3 A looking glass with a gold frame (50 gp value).
- 4 A book of daguerreotypes. Each photograph depicts a single man or woman dressed in strange clothing. There are fourteen pictures. If a photo is pulled from the book, the person depicted appears and serves the book's owner for 1d14 hours. They are treated as zero level characters.
- 5 A pair of ruby-covered slippers (200 gp value each). The shoes have no other properties.
- 6 A pair of old opera glasses that grants mystical vision equal to a *wizard sense* spell (spell check 30 or less as the user wishes). The effect lasts for 6 turns and can be used once per day.

The boxes, trunks, and other discarded objects are so much clutter, lacking any real items of value. Anyone searching the junk can make a DC 15 Luck check. If successful, they find one object listed above.

**Area 3-2—The Heart of the House:** *This large chamber has the pitched ceiling and exposed beams of a common attic, but it is not constructed from timbers. Instead, turgid flesh, flushed with vitality, forms the confines of this room. A floor of fleshy boards stretches before you, supporting a small collection of old furniture and other bric-a-brac. Dominating the room is a feminine figure nearly 12' tall and hanging above the floor. Strips of ragged, web-like cloth are entwined around her and stretch out to merge with the ceiling and walls. An aristocratic face stares down at you impassively as if evaluating you for some unknown purpose.*

This is the center of the House, the place where the Sempstress has slowly reknitted herself over the last millennium. Her powers are still not at their full strength, but she has other ways to overcome foes. If given the opportunity, she speaks to the PCs, addressing them in a voice that gains strength as she speaks. The Sempstress speaks like a lady of the high court, albeit using archaic terms and turns of phrases.

### Confronting the Sempstress—Communicating

The Sempstress attempts to communicate with the party rather than attack outright. She will attempt to ensnare them with falsehoods and half-truths, even making them believe that the Custodian of Parts is responsible for the

attack on them that spurred their trip to the House of Tattered Remnants.

- The Sempstress explains that she is a prisoner of the House, entrapped here by the Custodian of Parts who uses her to maintain the House with her power while he unleashes his horrors upon the various physical dimensions.
- If the mirrors are mentioned, the Sempstress states that she has been watching the PCs, hoping that they'd come to free her. She claims her long imprisonment has granted her some abilities to perceive events happening elsewhere in the House.
- She pleads with the player characters to free her. She claims that the Custodian holds the key to her freedom and if it is slain, she can leave the House and return to her home dimension.
- If asked why she's imprisoned, the Sempstress claims the Custodian has been using her ability to warp flesh and dimensional patterns to both create his minions and hold the House together.

If it becomes obvious that the party is not deceived by her tale, the Sempstress screams in frustration, and then announces, "Your ancestors had the audacity to challenge me, stripping me of my prowess and rightful role as fear-weaver. Enough of this charade; now you pay for your ancestors' crimes with the blood you share!" With that, her minions strike.

### Confronting the Sempstress—Fighting

If the PCs initiate combat or fail to believe her lies, the Sempstress' minions attack. The old wardrobes and steamer trunks in the Heart spring open and a group of patchwork stalkers leap out to attack, surprising the party if the PC with the worst Luck fails her Luck check.

**Patchwork Stalker (1 per PC):** Init +3; Atk bone knife +5 melee (1d6+1 or 1d12+1 plus critical if sneak attack); AC 14; HD 3d6; hp 15 each; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP create House of Tattered Remnants doorway, sneak attack (d16/IV crit against sleeping or surprised opponents); SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +3; AL C.

In the event that the Sempstress was alerted to the PCs' presence, either via spying them in the House's mirror or by their slaying the Custodian of Parts, she has had time to assemble additional aid. A pair of reality-tailors, weird manipulators of truths, step out of abruptly-appearing rips in the air that swiftly seal behind them. They then use their magical manipulation of reality to weave spells against the party.

**Reality-Tailors (2):** Init +3; Atk finger rake +5 melee (1d6+2); AC 15; HD 5d10; hp 40 each; MV 30; Act 2d20; SP weave reality (produces stable spell effects for the following spells: *color spray, magic missile, magic shield, mending, sleep, mirror image, ray of enfeeblement, scare, shatter, spider web, dispel magic, slow, and turn to stone*), suffers half-damage from non-magical attacks; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +7; AL C.



These minions of the Sempstress dress in flowing, patchwork robes of dark mottled colors (gray, black, indigo, etc.) and cover their features with the crow-like masks of plague doctors. Their fingers are pierced with thread-dangling needles, resembling agitated pincushions.

Reality-tailors pull apart matter and energy and reshape it to their own desires. This makes them unparalleled sorcerers. A reality-tailor does not make spell checks like other wizards, but may instead choose the effect it wishes to create from its repertoire of powers. Each time it rewweaves reality, it loses some of its might and subsequent effects are at a reduced level.

A reality-tailor uses the following spell check progression: 24, 20, 18, 17, 16, 15, 14, 13, 12. The first spell it invokes, regardless of level or type, takes effect as if the spell check was 24. The next spell manifests with a 20 spell check, and the third as if an 18 was rolled. This progression continues until the final spell check of 12 takes effect, after which time the reality-tailor must rest for at least one hour before it can shape reality again. For each hour that passes, the creature regains one entry on its spell check progression beginning with the lowest number used.

**The Sempstress (1):** Init +6; Atk needle-tipped fingers +9 melee (2d6+3 plus stitch flesh); AC 15; HD 10d10; hp 80; MV

40'; Act 2d20; SP unravel (30' range; victim must make a Fort DC 13 or lose 1 stability), suture flesh, immune to non-magical attacks, sew own wounds (heal 1d10 hit points; uses 1 action die); SV Fort +10, Ref +5, Will +15; AL C.

The Sempstress appears as a beautiful yet inhumanly-tall woman with thread-like hair, delicate stitch work along her chin, nose, and fingers that seems to accentuate her beauty rather than mar it, and dressed in a patchwork gown of regal fashion. Although she appears bound by tatters of cloth, she can move freely.

The Sempstress allows her minions to fight for her, employing her unravel ability from afar on her enemies. When employing this power, strands of fleshy cloth attack the victim and lash away at their physical bodies, imparting stability loss. If the Sempstress is forced into melee combat, she fights with her needle-like fingers. These fingers not only inflict damage, but can suture her enemy's flesh together if they fail a DC 14 Reflex save. The sutures pin skin to skin, trapping arms to torso, legs together, fingers sewn back, etc. The pain and impeded movement imposes a cumulative -1 die penalty to all attacks, spell checks, or other rolls that depend on mobility (judge's choice). An opponent reduced to a d8 or less action die by her attacks is completely immobilized.



# ENDING THE ADVENTURE

Defeating the Sempstress in the House of Tattered Remnants causes the entity to unravel and become lost to the various voids in between the planes. She may be defeated for good or may be able to reconstruct herself after a millennium or two. In any event, the PCs have triumphed and the physical plane is safe from the Sempstress for now.

With its mistress defeated, the House begins to fall to pieces around the PCs. They have little time to dawdle, for after ten rounds the former prison collapses like a house of cards, its various components slipping through dimensional cracks to return to their planes of origin. If the PCs fail to escape the House by then, they find themselves in another place and time of the judge's choosing when the room they are in returns from whence it came. They must find a new means to return to their native dimension as determined by the judge.

As the House collapses, any closeable garment container can be utilized to escape. Diving into a closet, wardrobe, chest of drawers, or similar container causes the PC to be drawn back to her native dimension, arriving either from where they originally departed or, if the judge is feeling cruel, a completely different location on that dimension. There are several such containers in the attic, allowing the party to emerge unscathed from the collapsing House.

Unraveled PCs lose any manifested unraveling traits at a rate of one per month. The judge determines which trait is lost randomly. Other means might expedite the removal of unraveling traits at the judge's choosing.

If one of the PCs was reduced to zero stability during the adventure and became completely unraveled, the judge has the option of reintroducing that character as a monstrous foe later in the campaign. The PC may be transformed into a patchwork stalker by the Custodian of Parts or – if the judge

wants to really twist the figurative knife – the lost character could become the next incarnation of the Sempstress, taking up her career of evil against the world. Her former allies will likely be the first targets in her campaign...

## APPENDIX A: THE BRIGHT

The Bright was created centuries ago by the Custodian of Parts, fashioned from bits of jewelry that he found adorning his inventory of horrors. He wove the last lingering remnants of souls that clung to their mortal remains and bound them into the Bright. The item resembles a cameo brooch with an aristocratic woman (the Sempstress) depicted on its face. It is highly tarnished, but if polished, it emits a soft blue-white glow.

The Bright nullifies the Sempstress' power, robbing her of some of her more dangerous abilities and minions. If the Bright is brandished at the Sempstress, blue-white light streams from it with the force of a thunder blast. It fills the entire room in which it resides, bathing all within it in its silvery-cerulean glow. This light has no effect on the PCs, but is detrimental to the Sempstress.

Once bathed in the light of the Bright, the Sempstress' patchwork stalker minions fall to pieces, destroyed by the purity of the light. The various body parts quick decay into a putrid sludge. The reality-tailors are unaffected by the Bright's power.

The Bright also robs the Sempstress of her connection with the House of Tattered Remnants. Once exposed to the Bright's luminosity she can no longer unravel her enemies' physical bodies and is forced to deal with them in physical battle.

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# DUNGEON CRAWL CLASSICS HORROR

## THE SINISTER SUTURES OF THE SEMPSTRESS

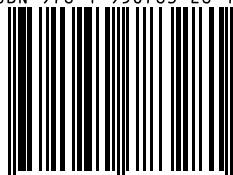
A LEVEL 6 ADVENTURE  
BY MACABRE MICHAEL CURTIS

**Mother was wrong: There are monsters in the closet! Terror seeks out the adventurers in the safety of their own homes, drawing them into a tailored web of vengeance long-deferred. Torn from their beds, the PCs find themselves trapped in the House of Tattered Remnants, the home and prison of an eldritch entity known only as the Sempstress. The adventurers must overcome patchwork horrors, unearthly craftsmen, and even the unravelling of their own realities if they hope to defeat the Sempstress in her lair and escape the House. Or will they be unmade by the Sempstress' evil?**

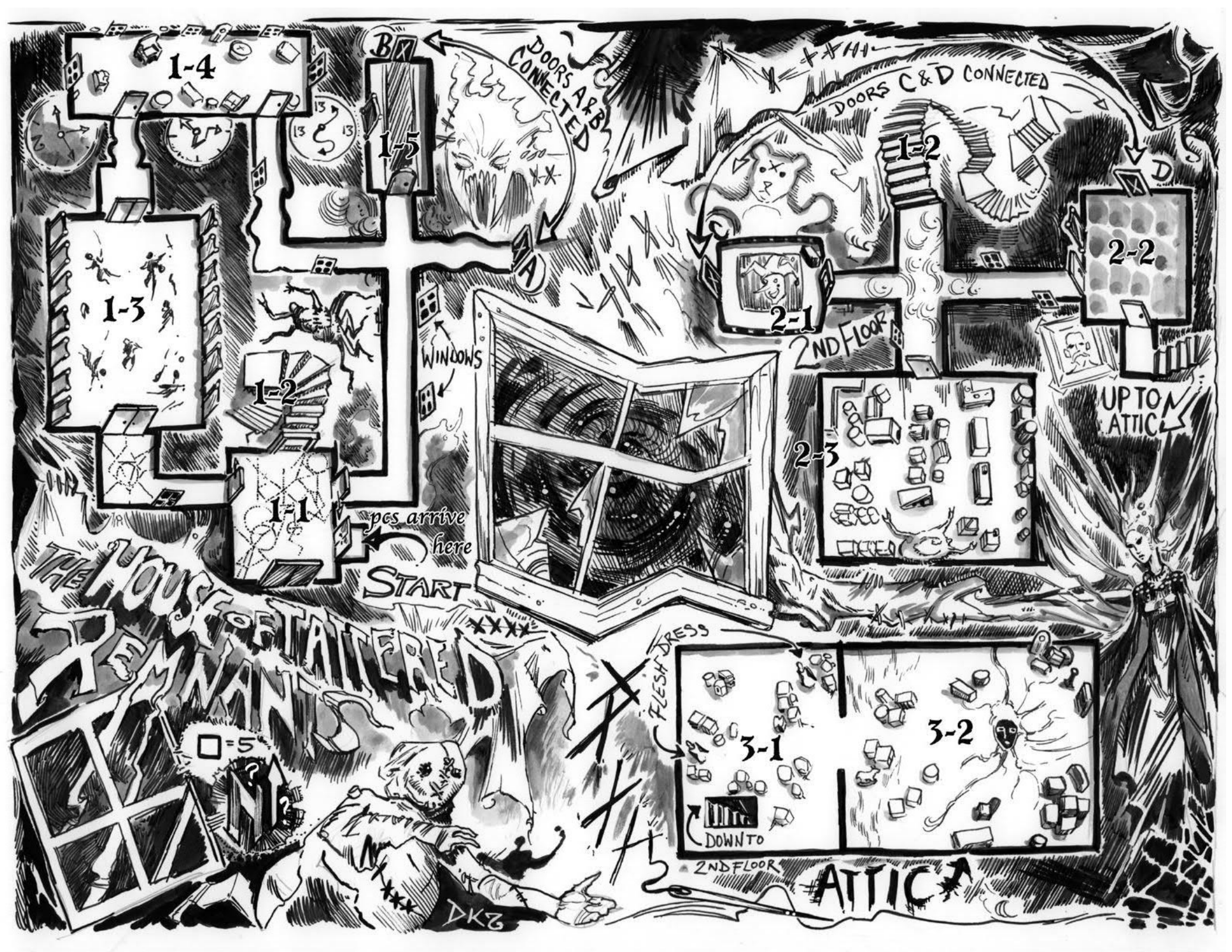


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1-4

B

DOORS A&B CONNECTED

DOORS C&D CONNECTED

1-5

1-2

2-2

1-3

1-2

WINDOWS

2ND FLOOR

2-3

UP TO ATTICA

1-1

pcs arrive here

START

2-1

THE HOUSE REMAINS UNALTERED

FLESH DRESS

3-1

3-2

DOWN TO

2ND FLOOR

ATTICA

0-5

DK6