

CURSE OF STRAHD: DEATH HOUSE SCRIPT

*A CAMPAIGN AIDE
FOR CURSE OF STRAHD*

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DEATH HOUSE DESCRIPTIONS

"There's a monster in the basement, and children in the attic. Two monsters—the Dursts. Elisabeth and Gustav. With open arms they welcome you to the Death House."

FOREWORD

Anyone that's peeked at *Death House*, the optional prologue for *Curse of Strahd*, will notice that, unlike most modules, the areas lack descriptions, and the information is as dry as the nursemaid's bones. This often leads to the DM reading aloud the provided information and possibly giving away spoilers ("This room contains a bed, a wardrobe, and a mirror behind which is a secret—oops!"). With this handout, you can keep a handy-dandy script at your side.

DISCLAIMER: THIS IS NOT A REPLACEMENT FOR THE *DEATH HOUSE* MODULE; YOU WILL STILL NEED TO REFER TO THE MODULE.

CHANGES MADE TO *DEATH HOUSE*

Because of the lack of interaction with NPCs or meaningful exploration, I've added a few simple, optional variants to *Death House*:

- A harpsichord plays from the Conservatory (Area 10), heard as soon as the players enter the Main Hall.
- Once the adventurers reach the second floor, Baby Walter can be heard crying from Area 15, and a woman seemingly sings to him a lullaby.
- The ghouls in Area 29 have been scattered across the dungeon, their guttural snarls echoing throughout the depths.

These noises add ambiance, and serve to frustrate the players, who can never seem to find the source before it ceases.

APPROACHING THE MANOR

When the adventurers approach the Durst Manor, read the following:

The streets are choked with mist, out from which looms a tall, brick house that's seen better days. The windows are dark, grimy. The gate trembles in the wind, squealing softly on its hinges. The neighboring homes have all been abandoned, their windows and doors boarded up and left for greener pastures.

1. ENTRANCE (PG. 212)

A rusted wrought-iron gate rattles from amidst the mists that strangle the street. The wind moans like a neglected child, but all you find within the manor is swollen silence.

FOYER

Once the adventurers enter the manor, read:

Ignoring a shiver, you escape the clinging mists and cross the stone portico into the house. A chill hangs in the air. Oaken doors stand before you, silent and brooding. You find yourself in an immaculate foyer, decorated with portraits and heraldries. A family of stony-faced aristocrats watch you with disinterest; the plaque on the frame reads "the Dursts" in dull, gold lettering.

On the southern wall you find a shield emblazoned with a coat-of-arms: a golden windmill on a red field.

Mahogany-framed doors lead deeper into the manor.

2. MAIN HALL (PG. 212)

It's almost breathtaking. In the gloom beyond the foyer, the main hall glitters. Its wood-paneled walls are ornately carved with idyllic scenes of frolicking nymphs and satyrs. At one end of the hall, a sweeping red marble staircase climbs to unknown heights; at the other is a black marble fireplace, cold and unlit. Mounted above the mantelshelf is a longsword, a windmill cameo worked into its hilt.

THE HARPSICHOARD

From the moment the adventurers enter the Main Hall, they hear music from the Conservatory (Area 10) on the second floor. Read:

Music floats down the stairs—a harpsichord. It's all right. It starts and stops. Sections are oft repeated, this time with gusto. Whomever is playing the instrument clearly is a novice.

Once the adventurers are halfway up the stairs to the Upper Hall (Area 6), the music stops.

CLOAKROOM

When a character inspects 2A, the cloakroom, read:
You open upon a closet, stocked with several black cloaks. Someone's left a top hat on the high shelf. Fancy.

WALL PANELING

When a character inspects the walls and succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check, read:
You marvel at the craftsmanship of the ornate walls, but soon realize that that between the nymphs and satyrs lie serpents and skulls, all woven into the design. Maybe it's metaphorical.

3. DEN OF WOLVES (PG. 212)

Out from the darkness loom wolves, their snarls frozen forevermore. A stag's head is mounted above the unlit fireplace. Fine chairs draped in furs face the hearth, with a cask of wine and a pipe rack on the table between them, the goblets dry and empty, the candelabrum gleaming in your lamplight. The wax has melted over, leaving little white islands on the table. Cabinets line the walls. In one darkened corner of the room, a chandelier hangs over a cloth-covered table.

CABINETS:

When a character inspects the cabinets, read:
Armed with your lamplight, you squint through the glass-paneled cabinets. In one, you find an assortment of wine glasses, and a small wooden box. The other is locked, sporting behind its glass three crossbows: one of heavy oak, one of a lighter frame, and the other shaped to fit into a single hand. Three cases of bolts lean against the frame.

4. KITCHEN AND PANTRY (PG. 213)

The kitchen, gloomy as it might be, is tidy. The shelves are neatly stocked with dishware. The worktable has been wiped clean, a cutting board left behind as the only oversight. The iron pipes of the oven snake out like a willow tree caught in a windstorm, twisting up and into the ceiling. The door to the pantry hangs ajar, and a dumbwaiter sits in the corner, its gate yawning open.

PANTRY

When a character inspects the pantry, read:
The pantry is cramped, and well-stocked. Casks labeled as "wheat" and "ale" sit at the far-wall, next to a sack of old potatoes. There are pouches with dried jerky, nuts, seeds. An entire shelf is devoted to spices, with three racks. The Dursts, you notice, are out of salt.

The food is kept fresh, but stale, by Death House; the jerky, as you might guess, is human flesh and chock-full of protein.

DUMBWAITER

When a character inspects the dumbwaiter, read:
The dumbwaiter yawns before you. Craning your neck upward, you can see that its narrow stone shaft leads upward to two floors—the hinges on the hatches above gleam in your lamplight. It works, you see, via a simple rope-and-pulley mechanism. A nest of cables lines the shaft, connecting to a brass bell in the kitchen. The entire thing is too cramped for anything but a child to fit into.

5. DINING ROOM (PG. 213)

A crystal chandelier glitters above the dining room, watching over eight empty chairs. The chairs are high-backed and cushioned with velvet—velvet that matches the silken drapes covering the windows. Like the main hall, the walls are ornately carved with elegant images of deer flitting among ancient trees. The table is set, all silverware polished to a dazzling shine.

A painting of an alpine vale is mounted above the unlit fireplace. A tapestry depicting nobles hunting wolves from horseback hangs from the wall. This, you see, is privilege at its finest. The Durst family lives well and lives large.

WALL PANELING

When a character inspects the walls and succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check, read:
Peering at the wood paneling, you notice twisted faces carved into the tree trunks. Wolves lurk in the shadows, ever-ready to snap at the unsuspecting doe. The circle of life at its finest.

6. UPPER HALL (PG. 213)

A cold draft sweeps down the marble staircase as it delivers you to a darkened hall. Above the mantelpiece hangs another portrait of the Durst family: Rose and Thorn smile down on you. Their mother, her face darkened with a hint of scorn, cradles a swaddled baby. Two mahogany doors are intricately carved with dancing youths. Suits of armor flank these doors, clutching spears, their gazes empty beneath wolf-shaped visors. A third, thin door stands to the right of the stairs, which continue climbing upward.

WALL PANELING

When a character inspects the walls and succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check, read:

The youths aren't actually dancing you see but fighting off swarms of bats. Aren't we all?

7. SERVANTS ROOM (PG. 213)

The room is dusty and undecorated. Two lumpy, straw-filled mattresses sit on worn out bedframes, from under which footlockers loom. Servants' uniforms hang in an open closet. The dumbwaiter yawns like a tired youth with no knowledge left in his head.

8. LIBRARY (PG. 213)

The library has already been detailed in a true script in the Prologue. However, not to be outdone, the following, alternative text has been written for you, to save you from turning the page. Read:

Here is a place of great study. A wealth of knowledge sits on floor-to-ceiling bookshelves: weighty tomes of untold worth—novels, treatises, encyclopedias, poetry, histories. So vast is this library that a rolling ladder is necessary to reach the high shelves. An exquisite desk faces the hearth, upon the mantelpiece thereof hangs a framed portrait of a windmill perched atop a rocky crag. Two reading chairs flank the fireplace, stuffed and lovely and inviting.

SHELVED TITLES

Your players are sure to ask what sort of titles can be found on the shelves. Here are some suggestions. As noted in the module, all books rot if taken from the manor.

- *Destruction of the Dusk Elves*
- *Alchemical Secrets Best Left Unknown*
- *Blades of Brass* by Walt Whitdwarf
- *Ways of the Wildfolk*
- *Political Theory in Dismal Days*

9. SECRET ROOM (PG. 214)

The bookshelf swings open, hidden hinges squealing in the gloom. Dusty shelves line the walls of a cramped room, packed with tomes decorated only in eldritch runes and ominous symbols. You spot a heavy chest at the end of the hall, squatting as if it harbors some coveted secret—a secret worth dying for, apparently, if the skeleton in rotting leathers is any clue to the insidious danger you've all found yourself in.

BLASPHEMOUS TEXTS

Your players are sure to ask for the titles of what can be found on these shelves. Here are some suggestions. All books rot if taken from the manor.

- *In the Light of Osybus*
- *Rituals of the Life-Caller*
- *Heart of Midnight*
- *Fantastic Devils and Where to Find Them*
- A gnarled tome in Infernal that can be translated as "*Got Ninety-Nine Problems and a Demon Ain't One*"

10. CONSERVATORY (PG. 214)

A harpsichord looms out from the dark, facing a nearby standing harp. The brass-plated chandelier casts a dull sheen in your lamplight, as if to half-heartedly warn you away. The fireplace lies cold, decorated by alabaster figurines of dancers neatly placed on the mantelpiece. Velvet upholstered chairs line the walls for those that would be serenaded with what would no doubt be beautiful music. It's lonely here. A chill hangs in the air.

THE MANTELPIECE

When a character inspects the fireplace, read:

Now that you stand near the fireplace, you see that the some of the figurines are actually skeletons carved from alabaster. Art makes ascetics out of us all.

11. BALCONY (PG. 214)

The red marble staircase delivers you to its full height: the third floor. The air is choked with dust. The walls—carved with autumn woodland scenes—are mounted by unlit oil lamps. An infant's cries cut the silence into tattered chunks while a cobwebbed suit of armor stands in eternal vigilance, facing the balcony railing. Facing you.

THE ARMOR ANIMATED

If the characters pass within 5 feet of the suit of **animated armor**, it attacks. Read:

Metal scrapes against wood—a fist suddenly seizes you by the hair and slams its offhand into your jaw! You look about the room and see no other person, only a shifting suit of armor—and it draws back its scaled fist for another blow.

WAILING WALTER

As soon as the adventurers begin ascending to the third floor, they hear the cries of baby Walter from the Nursemaid's Suite (Area 12). Read:

It starts slow at first, but soon a baby begins its wailing. After a few moments, you hear feet on the floor above, and a door creaking open.

WALL PANELING

When a character inspects the walls and succeeds on a DC 12 Wisdom (Perception) check, read:

Between the that autumn decadence, between the trees and falling leaves and dancing critters, corpses swing from the branches while worms burst from the ground in teeming swarms. This is getting ridiculous.

12. MASTER'S SUITE (PG. 214)

You squint at a pair of double doors, paned with stained glass. Wiping away some of the dust, you can see it depicts windmills. The hinges squeal at your touch, revealing a magnificent suite choked with dust and neglect. A rotting tiger-skin rug lies before the ashen fireplace, watched over by a wilting portrait of the Durst parents. The four-poster bed's curtains hang open, revealing yellowing sheets while the wind rattles a door leading out towards a balcony.

Where are the servants? you can't but wonder, demand, even. Where are the Dursts? How might the first two floors be so immaculate, while the third is such a rotting travesty?

CLOSER INSPECTIONS

Once a character searches the darkened room, read: The wardrobes are empty. Completely empty, everything gone. Not even a single hanger remains. Elisabeth's vanity is caked in grime and dust. A greasy jewelry box sits on the desk. The dumbwaiter yawns half open, the gate almost stuck in its frame. You find a dusted mirror set upon a closet door, and beyond your confused, disgusted expression you see in the reflection only the gloomy neglect of the suite.

13. BATHROOM (PG. 215)

As written in the Death House module, the pipes in the bathroom are dry, the cistern empty. Read:

As you approach this door, you hear water dripping from a spigot. It's the mold that hits you first, assailing your senses, twisting its tongue down your throat like a rabid lover. The wooden tub of this bathroom is furry with moss. The hand towels hanging from a rod—once embroidered with golden windmills, you see—are now tattered rags. You look for the source of water, that slow thundering, and find that the spigot is dry.

14. STORAGE ROOM (PG. 215)

The door creaks open onto a cramped storage closet. Rotted sheets and moldy bars of soap sit on the shelves. A cobwebbed broom leans against the far wall.

THE BROOM OF UNNECESSARY VITRIOL

When a character enters within 5 feet of the **broom of animated attack**, it animates and attacks. Read:

As you turn to leave, something tickles the nape of your neck. Bristles. Rough bristles. You look back—and freeze in shock as a broom rears back, free of any earthly hands, and swings at your skull!

15. NURSEMAID'S SUITE (PG. 215)

When a character approaches the suite, read:

Just as you reach for the door, you pause, craning your ear. The wailing of a newborn echoes throughout the suite. A young woman tries to quiet the child, poorly singing a lullaby. Gently, you tease open the door, finding no one inside. Instead, the cries come from behind a thin door to your right.

"Hush little baby," the woman sings, "don't say a word. Mama's gonna buy you a Blinsky toy... And if that toy don't work... Walter, stop crying. Please, stop crying. Morninglord's light, please just *stop crying*."

When a character enters the suite, they find no woman, no light, only gloom and neglect. Read:

Cobwebs are everywhere in this room: along the windows, between the the posts of the bed, stretched across the wardrobe. Even the mirror set into the wall is draped in the eerie silk. Stained glass doors lead to the balcony you saw from outside, and gloomy, dust-choked air haunts this place like a distant memory. Walter's wails come from behind a door to your immediate right.

THE MIRROR

If a character inspects the mirror, read:

The full-length mirror sits in an ornate frame carved in the likeness of ivy and berries. Eyeballs, you notice, are scattered amongst the berries. Fitting. The eyes truly *are* the windows to the soul, aren't they?

VARIANT: UNDER THE SHROUD

Rather than the specter attacking immediately—surely a deadly fight, this—you can instead trigger it if the adventurers lift the shroud over Walter's crib. The baby cries until someone does or until after the specter attacks. It offers one last chance for the players to avoid a deadly encounter. If so, read:

You approach the wails of baby Walter, pushing open the door. His dreary nursery is decorated in strange toys—a mobile of black and white bats, a rocking chair in the shape of a wolf. A black shroud embroidered in windmills covers the crib. No woman can be found—perhaps she left for the balcony—but still Walter cries from his crib.

THE NURSEMAID'S SPECTER

Whenever or however the characters rouse the **specter**, read:

You lift the shroud—and nothing's there. The wailing? Gone. The baby? Nowhere to be found, just an empty bundle... And then you hear her on the bed behind you: a weeping woman, skeletal-thin, dressed in a soiled, white gown. She looks over her shoulder, hair hanging like rotted vines. Her face stretches impossibly far into a ghastly visage, and she *screams!* The flesh falls from her face in tattered chunks; one leg shifts *through* the bed, and in a single stride her bleeding claws are at your throat!

Might the gods take pity on the poor fool that's about to learn the first lesson *Curse of Strahd* the hard way.

16. ATTIC HALL (PG. 215)

The attic is choked with dust and cobwebs. A padlocked door stands nearby, from which the sounds of children at play float.

17. SPARE BEDROOM (PG. 215)

The door squeals open onto a spare bedroom choked with dust. The wardrobe lies open and empty. The desk is stained red—wine, perhaps?. A rocking chair rocks slightly with the draft you've created, while a doll in a lacy, yellow dress smiles at you. Webs drape her head like a wedding veil.

18. STORAGE ROOM (PG. 215)

The chamber is packed with old furniture draped in yellowing sheets—chairs, coat racks, coaches dappled with mold, standing mirrors, mannequins that loom out from the shadows like forgotten widows and witnesses to ruin. A wooden trunk sits nearby, its cover slightly ajar.

THE NURSEMAID'S SPECTER

If the characters disturb the remains, the nursemaid's specter comes a-reaping. Read the following:

You swing open the trunk and almost recoil at your newfound treasure: a frail, bleached skeleton, wrapped in a bloodstained bedsheet. You hear a rustling sound behind you. The sheet of a mannequin falling to the ground in a windless room—and in that moment a hand seizes on your wrist! A scream shatters the silence! A woman's face *phases through* the trunk, her entire body coming through the floor, flesh falling from her bones in tattered chunks!

19. SPARE BEDROOM (PG. 215)

You open upon a spare bedroom smothered by cobwebs. Spiders crawl from the wardrobe in droves to greet their new visitor.

20. CHILDREN'S ROOM (PG. 215)

From behind the door float Rose and Thorn's voices. "Rock! Paper! Scissors! Shoot!" little Thorn shouts. The padlock clinks noisily as you work on its lock, then clatters to the ground. The children hush as you open the door. The gloom strangles this place. You spot two child-sized beds, a toy chest, and a dollhouse—it's a perfect replica of the Durst Manor, you realize. What's most unsettling is that the room's sole window is bricked up—that is until you spot the small skeletons dressed in tattered but familiar clothing. The smaller of the two cradles a doll as if it alone could've changed the future.

THE CHILDREN

If the dollhouse or chest is disturbed, Rose and Thorn appear. Read:

A sudden chill seizes your spine. Two children appear on a nearby bed. Rose and Thorn. Cradling her little brother, Rose scowls and asks, "Are you here to play with us?"

21. SECRET STAIRS (PG. 217)

Once the characters have met the requirements to materialize the door, and they find it, read:

Where once there was nothing now stands a thick, black door that leads only down into darkness.

If the characters descend (which they will, because the train's already left the station, let's face it), read:

A tight staircase spirals down into darkness between walls of mortared stone. Cobwebs and dust are everywhere, the citizens of this cramped passage. Down and down into the depths you go, the shaft growing tighter and tighter. The air is stale, even bitter. Just as you can handle it no longer, just as your lungs are fit to burst, you find yourself before an archway that leads to a tunnel of carved earth and cold stone.

22. DUNGEON LEVEL ACCESS (PG. 217)

The tunnel forks left and right, both leading into darkness. And then? Floating out from that utter blackness, from the nighted depths? Chanting. Ethereal chanting by a score of souls, chanting that echoes off of every stone and corner of this wretched place, rising and falling in intonation, the words too distant, too faint to discern, but eerie and incessant. The chanting caresses you like an old lover, too far-gone to be touched, but too close to be forgotten.

23. FAMILY CRYPTS (PG. 217)

Crypts have been hewn from the earth, some sealed by slabs, some left ajar. The dirt and grime is too thick to read the names engraved upon the slabs, until finally curiosity gets the best of you.

If a character disturbs the coffin in Elisabeth's crypt (Area 23D), a **swarm of insects** surge from the wall, attacking the heroes who still have yet to cut a break. Groaning, you haul the stone coffin lid from its frame... and find nothing but dust and dark air inside. Something rustles behind the clay wall—crumbled heaps drop to the floor as a teeming mass of insects boil out from the earth.

24. CULT INITIATES QTRS. (PG. 218)

Alcoves line this filthy room, each stocked with a moldy straw pallet. At the end of the hall, a wooden table leans on uneven legs, its surface scratched and stained. A slender hallway crawling with insects leads to a short set of stairs.

VARIANT: SINGING GHOULS

If you're using the Singing Ghouls variant, also read: The stench of rot taints the air. Something shuffles about in one of the nearby alcoves, snarling in a guttural language better left unknown by the men of this world.

25. WELL & CULTIST QTRS. (PG. 218)

Past curious worms and roaches you go, down the stone-carved steps. A bucket hangs atop a well in the center of the room. Alcoves line the walls—no doors, no privacy—with moldering straw mattresses and padlocked chests inside.

VARIANT: SINGING GHOULS

If you are using the Singing Ghouls variant, one of the **ghouls** is in the well, chanting to itself ("He is the Ancient. He is the Land") in a guttural language. Read:

Guttural noises bounce off the stones of the well, ringing out across the room in a rhythm.

If a character passes within 5 feet of the well, the **ghoul** attempts to seize them, making a grappling check. Read:

Fingers tickle your wrist—then seize onto your arm. From the black waters a rotted face splits into a fanged, yellow smile!

VARIANT: SINGING GHOULS

Instead of a likely-lethal encounter with no chance for the adventurers to detect, you can instead scatter the ghouls found in Area 29, letting their guttural, mindless snarls echo throughout the dungeon. From Area 22, characters can hear one ghoul in Area 24 meandering about. Another can be found in Area 25, and the remaining two shamble about in Area 29. They all can be heard from adjacent areas.

26. HIDDEN SPIKED PIT (PG. 218)

You follow the tunnel, its packed-earth walls crawling with insects. They seem to move only in between syllables of that eerie chanting.

As described in the prologue, a character must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to notice the trap, lest they fall in. The first character that falls takes 1d6 bludgeoning damage plus 2d10 piercing damage.

27. DINING HALL (PG. 218)

Long benches flank a scratched, wooden table. Bones litter the floor like ripped up chunks of carpet. You accidentally kick one, sending it sailing through the darkness. The chanting grows louder, ringing off every edge until finally infesting your teeth like vagrants. You try to get it out of your head, but can't... and find yourself humming to it instead.

28. LARDER (PG. 218)

A **grick** haunts the larder for some reason, with no rhyme nor reason as to why it's there. I'm not one to judge, clearly. Anyway, if a character passes within 5 feet of it, the beast attacks. Read:

Something stirs—wet flesh rasping against dry stone. Something seizes your arm! Something sharp, something slimy, and wet and *ravenous*. A beast with four fanged tentacles for a mouth lunges for you!

29. GHOULISH ENCOUNTER (PG. 218)

Four **ghouls** lay in this passageway, ready to make a bad day worse for our intrepid, unlucky adventurers. The air is thick with rot and filth. Your steps sound... hollow. Dust chokes the four-way tunnel, harshly throwing back your lamplight. As you venture further into the dark, the earth begins to churn! Rotted limbs burst from the clay: four corpses shamle toward you, their howls rending the nighted depths!

VARIANT: SINGING GHOULS

If you're using the Singing Ghouls variant described above, only two ghouls are present in this area, and they can be heard with a passive Perception score of 12. Mindless now in their hunger, the ghouls snarl and shamle throughout the dark. Read:

As you creep throughout the dark, the tunnels close in. Dust smothers the crossroads of the passageway. The stench of rot and filth invades your throat like a would-be conqueror—and in the distance come echoing guttural snarls as foul creatures shamle throughout the depths.

30. STAIRS DOWN (PG. 218)

Stairs fall before you—and it's in those black depths that that wretched chanting comes. The lizard at the back of your throat warns you away, begs you to leave this place... but there is only one way but forward. Dare you?

31. DARKLORD'S SHRINE (PG. 218)

Skeletons hang from rusty shackles. The chanting echoes dimly in this place. At the far end of the hall stands a painted statue carved in the likeness of a gaunt man dressed in a black cloak, his hand on the head of the faithful wolf at his side. In his right hand, the statue holds a smoky-gray crystal orb that casts a pale sheen across the floor.

THE SHADOWS ALIVE

If the characters touch the statue or take the orb, the five **shadows** manifest and attack. Your players will probably be slaughtered like defenseless, mewling sheep, so if you want to give them one last chance to boogie back from the edge of ruin, read:

A foul wind sweeps this place—one by one, shadows amass into thin figures, each hissing, shrieking, demanding, "Return the orb! Begone from this place!"

32. HIDDEN TRAPDOOR (PG. 219)

To notice the secret door to this area from Area 31 requires a successful DC 10 Wisdom (Perception) check, as noted in the module.

Behind the clay-layered door, stairs climb to a cramped platform from which a ladder ascends... and above it, a trapdoor, bolted shut from this side. With an acrid taste in your throat, you steel yourself, undo the bolt, and throw open the door. First you notice the paws of a wolf—and you soon realize you're back in the den on the first floor of the manor. Curious, since you never spotted even the hint of a trapdoor earlier.

33. CULT LEADERS' DEN (PG. 219)

The chamber is barren but for a rusting chandelier suspended over a table flanked by two high-backed chairs. The candlesticks standing in the corners of the room have long since melted away. Two doors lead to nearby halls.

MIMICRY OF A DOOR

Because this place wasn't deadly enough already, a **mimic** has made itself into a door. If the characters approach the southwestern door (possibly from Area 31), the mimic attacks the first creature to touch it. Read:

You reach out for the door—it doesn't budge. You try again, failing, and when you find that you can't pull away your hand is when the panic sets in. The door shivers, sprouting a pair of glossy eyes and far too many fangs. Snarling, this, this *thing* closes its jaws on your arm!

34. CULT LEADERS' QTRS. (PG. 219)

A spacious but dinghy chamber sweeps out before you. A bedroom. The moldy feather mattress rots atop its bedframe. A wardrobe leans against the earthen wall. At the foot of the bed sits a footlocker.

MEET THE DURSTS

The lovely hosts have somehow managed to pack themselves up behind a faux wall of clay, waiting for the day that Death House lures more fools into its godforsaken halls. When a character takes an object from the lockbox, these two **ghasts** attack. Read:

The footlocker is unlocked, and full of assorted possessions—a cloak, a yellowing leather book, a flask of strange liquid, four scarlet vials. As you're digging through it, you hear something shift behind you. Nothing but the earthen wall. You turn back to your loot, pulling out a chainmail shirt. Then comes the sound again. Just as you turn back, the wall crumbles in a great clatter! Two ghastly black-robed figures burst from the wall, snarling, their claws long and yellow! These undead crouch, then *leap* forward, shrieking out a dirge—a dirge for you.

35. RELIQUARY (PG. 219)

Alcoves stocked with grisly trophies line the chamber—a severed finger, a mummified hand, the shrunken head of a halfling, and more. The chanting has swollen into one great song that shakes the very stones of this wretched place, and at last you can discern its lyrics: "He is the Ancient" a legion voice sings, "He is the Land. He is the Ancient. He is the Land. *He is the Ancient. He is the Land.*"

36. PRISON (PG. 219)

A prison yawns before you in a dismal gloom. You almost even hear the creak of long undisturbed shackles. The walls and floors are stained a dull red. A macabre trail leads to a lone skeleton at the far end of the hall. Something gleams on its finger. Something gold.

37. PORTCULLIS (PG. 219)

The stairs descend to murky water, ending at a rusty iron portcullis. Beyond your reach, you spot the edge of a wooden wheel embedded into the wall, and beyond that lies only darkness. Darkness and chanting: "He is the Ancient. He is the Land."

38. RITUAL CHAMBER (PG. 219)

The waters lap hungrily at your ankles, sending ripples throughout its black surface. The chanting, that insidious, wretched, incessant, unforgiving chanting falls short. All's quiet. All. A ledge lines this chamber, overlooking a dais that rises from the dark water. Chains suspended from the ceiling swing above a bloodstained altar carved with gruesome depictions of grasping ghouls.

"ONE MUST DIE!"

Once a character climbs the dais, the show starts and death dances around the corner. Read:

You climb the dais. The bloodstained altar stands before you, whispering its tales to you. Red tales. At the far end of this vile chamber, a mound of refuse—bones, detritus—molders in a small alcove.

Shivers dance up your spine. It's as if the entire chamber awaits you with bated breath... And just as you reach the final step, an ill wind blows throughout the depths—thirteen shadowy figures manifest on the ledge, wielding black torches that seem to swallow light. Their faces are but voids, and in one great union they chant, "One must die! One must die! ONE MUST DIE!"

LORGHOTH THE DECAYER

If the cult is denied its sacrifice, they awaken the **shambling mound**, Lorghoth the Decayer. I, for one, think they have it coming.

Disgusted, you turn to leave the altar—the shadowy figures hiss, and their cries of ritual sacrifice turn to, "Lorghoth! Lorghoth! We awaken thee, Lorghoth! Rise, Decayer! Rise!" The chamber quivers, shakes! Dust falls from the ceiling. The mound of refuses shudders with newfound life, a teeming mass of vines and decay!

ENDINGS

A choice must be made: selflessness or selfishness?

THE CULT IS APPEASED (PG. 220)

If the adventurers sacrifice a creature on the altar, Death House harries them no longer. Read:

And just like that... All is quiet. Where once the hall thundered with cries of ritual sacrifice, there is only brooding silence. The blood streams down the altar, running through the cracks of the dais. The full weight of what you've done has yet to be realized—it is instead to manifest in your dreams for months and years to come, to haunt your every move like a shadow, to rest in your bones like a sickness, never quite excised.

In deafening silence, you and your remaining companions leave this wretched place. The halls are eerily quiet, but no danger abounds. The spirits that haunt this place seem... satisfied. Smug, even. The air is thick with it. As you leave this house of death behind, you know deep in your secret heart that here you'll stay forever. That no matter where you go on this earth, the Death House goes with you.

THE CULT IS DENIED (PG. 220)

Death House will not be denied its due. Here's sample text for the traps it lays; refer to pg. 220.

WINDOWS

You peel back the curtains, and with a mounting horror find that the glass has been replaced with brick. Whatever spirits haunt this wretched house have no intention of letting you leave.

DOORS

Where there were once doors are now slashing scythes, stained red in the blood of past victims. Doors to something new, then. Doors to death.

SMOKE

The room boils with smoke black as night and poisonous as a viper's kiss. Pain blooms in your very lungs, your guts. You taste bile at the end of your throat and know that the End is on Its way.

RATS IN THE WALLS

The wall crumbles beneath your strike, brittle as glass! Swarms upon swarms of rats surge out from the walls like arterial blood, gnashing their yellow teeth, squealing together in one deafening chorus.

ESCAPING DEATH HOUSE

It's up to you to narrate the party's flight from the manor. There are too many choices consider, so just make it your own. Here's something to start you off:

The very manor shakes in rage—bricks fall from the ceiling in a shower of dust, crashing into the waters, the dais, sending up plumes of stone shrapnel. You race from the dungeon, the dark halls pregnant with insects, all writhing and twisting in some mute agony unheard by men. All about you sing the wails of those void-faced spirits, howling their wounded disgust, howling for what they're owed: you.

SURVIVING DEATH HOUSE

Depending on the fortunes of the adventurers, you might need to play around with this last text:

Death surrounds you. Through those blasphemous halls you run, the wails of the dead chasing you down like rabid dogs, thundering about in this endless gloom until finally—finally—you hurl yourself out from that acursed manor and into the mist.

Now, and only now, do you know why the neighboring homes are boarded up, abandoned. Only now do you understand the full scope of this horror—the debauchery committed in those nighted depths.

You've escaped this house of death... at a cost. Paid in either blood or sanity or shattered dreams. Will you ever *truly* escape the Death House? Or shall it shadow you from these days and on, forevermore?

WHAT'S NEXT?

The adventurers, surely shell-shocked, some possibly even dead, are likely to seek that one universal solace: wine. The streets, they'll notice, are no longer choked by mist, and at the heart of this dismal village lies the Blood of the Vine Tavern, wherein they will meet Ismark Kolyana. That heartbroken, wretch of a man will turn to them with pity shining in his dull eyes, and tell them in no uncertain terms, "Welcome to Barovia."

CURSE OF STRAHD AIDES

Death House Script marks the second campaign aide I've released for *Curse of Strahd*. If you're looking for other ways to make the campaign easier, you can find my other work on DMs Guild or follow me on Twitter at @Wyatt_Trull; or contact me via wyattwalker.trull@gmail.com.

If you like what I've provided, please leave a rating or a comment like "This is great" or "Wyatt, you're handsome!" for these make it easier for me to pump out more tools for your campaign.

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