

Gregorius' Notes:

On the Weird OSR Fantasy

Year 2019



LAMENTATIONS
of the
FLAME PRINCESS
WEIRD FANTASY ROLE-PLAYING
COMPATIBLE PRODUCT

by Kai Pütz © 2020
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Gregorius' Notes: On the Weird OSR Fantasy #Year 2019 is a collection of selected articles I wrote for **my blog** in said year. Inside you will find a fictional heathen religion with a matching new character class, an adaption of Lovecraft's Merchants of the Black Galleys, magic items, two monsters, a mysterious NPC that is allied to one of them, a description for another world overlapping with ours, a little side-quest and other articles.

All written for and compatible with Lamentations of the Flame Princess(™).

17 pages of content (the other are cover, front matter, etc.).

Enjoy!

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The Faith of The Loving Mother

The very first goddess was the Mother, and mankind had worshiped her for ages, before the dawn of civilization. All of mankind were her children. She loved them and taught them the value of family life and kinship, of love between women and men, the bond between family and friends, the simple crafts and arts, to sing and dance, to gather and how to weather what life had in store.

Then, with the dawn of civilization, the men made their own gods, for they were jealous of the love, position and prestige only a mother could gain, for only she was the true source of life. Their faiths were build on dogma, dominion and many, many laws. They turned their eyes away from the Loving Mother and pushed her into the darkness, in an attempt to subjugate and replace here. It broke the heart of the Mother. She tried to keep those that remained with her, but one by one the new faith drove them off: with insults, punishment and ostracism. So, she withdraw her counsel, as it was not sought anymore, and left mankind to the errors of its ways. But as a mother, she never completely gave up her love for her children.

Those who want to come back to her, to make peace with her and join the family again, may do so, after they have show that they mean it. For even a mother cannot lightly forget the grief and vilification that She has suffered: no woman would. To those that find their way back to her, She offers counsel again, as well as aid and the joys of freedom of the senses. For creation is there to be enjoyed. To make sure that nobody that found her again may ever bear the seed of that kind of jealous betrayal to her ways again, she denies their most beloved what the followers of the now dominant gods crave: wealth and power. They are to be the motherly and fatherly leaders of the family.

The Faith of the Loving Mother is a heathen cult. Those that try to spread the word are often mistaken for traveling folk or carny people. They make use of this, as "having a good time" is one of the good things their faith has to offer, and those that bring song, dance and merry-making are the kind of strangers usually welcome in almost all communities, even if only for a while. Aside from that, the believers of the Mother keep their true ways secret, and those in a village who adhere to it are secretive about it as well. The word of the Loving Mother spreads only slowly. Her family does not preach, it waits for somebody to come and ask, or for somebody to show keen interest and an open heart.

What the Faith of the Loving Mother is like:

#it values family, community, communal ties, charity and life itself. The life of mankind shall not be a burden, but something that the people share and enjoy with another.

#it does -not- center on an afterlife, but about living a good and fulfilling life.

#it is neither dogmatic about monogamy nor fully rejecting it. As soon as a child is coming, the father and the mother are responsible for the child till it has founded its own family or decided to leave the parents' household.

#personal wealth is shunned in favor of communal wealth. As families share what they have, the families of a community are meant to share what they have, and help another.

#those that serve the community the most are those whose voice shall be the most valued in the community.

#a mother's service is being the source of life by giving birth to the child, after being seeded by a man. Thereby, the voice of a mother shall count accordingly more in the community.

#the Beloved of the Mother (the men and women serving to spread her word and act as counselors in all matters) shall know a craft, shall know an art (in both cases: no matter how humble), shall walk barefoot in all but winter, shall not own riches and shall never benefit themselves directly from the gifts that the Mother taught them to bestow on Her behalf. As long as it does not endanger them, they shall wear colorful clothes to represent the joyfulness of life.

#those that sinned against family or community or the Mother's Ways, the Beloved shall send on a fitting quest, so that they may have a chance to redeem themselves.



New Class: Cleric of the Loving Mother

Level and Experience: the Level/XP ladder of the Magic-User class applies (to make up for the special benefits that come with the combination of a Cleric and a Specialist).

HP: as Cleric

Saving Throws: as Specialist

Spells: half of what a Cleric would have access to, round down. Furthermore, Clerics of the Loving Mother may never learn spells of level 6 and above.

Skill points: Half of what a Specialist would gain. Furthermore, Clerics of the Loving Mother may never invest Skill points into *Sleight of Hand* and *Sneak Attack*.

Special Ability: *Remove Curse*

The Clerics of the Loving Mother may *remove curse* without any need to have the spell prepared (and may never learn it). They may cast it for free if the target has sought the counsel of the cleric and fulfilled the assigned quest (see below for examples).

If the target tried to fool the cleric, the curse will not be removed but another will be placed by the enraged celestial force. Each and every cleric of the Loving Mother will recognize with a single glance that this character has tried to betray the Mother instead of fulfilling the quest.

20 Sample Quests of the Loving Mother

#01: Return a lost child to its family.

#02: Rescue a believer from imprisonment and punishment by the dominant religion.

#03: Bring just punishment to one that oppresses mothers and/or families.

#04: Suffer an infection with a certain disease, and return to be cured.

#05: Find another Beloved of the Mother, explain what has brought this quest upon you, and return with his or her blessing.

#06: Spend five days in five different families, in five different communities.

#07: Protect three different families from three different dangers.

#08: Be at the celebration of the birth of a child, the marriage of a couple and the mourning of a recently deceased. Return and tell the Beloved about the child, the couple and the one that passed away.

#09: Help a couple in being happy with another.

#10: Do the daily work of somebody else for three days, for four different people in four different places. Do not receive anything for it but food and shelter.

#11: Ask three different men what they wish you to do for them, and do it. All of them must be the father of at least three children.

#12: Gather three young orphans and persuade them to become the Beloved Ones charges on their own free will.

#13: Find somebody severely ill and help him or her in getting well again.

#14: Serve somebody that is blind for seven days and seven nights.

#15: Find a woman that is only weeks away from giving birth. Have her accept your help in the days to come.

#16: Search and return lost livestock of somebody at least two days of travel away.

#17: Travel northward seven days without washing, and return without washing. Then, travel with the Beloved One till you find somebody that is willing to allow you to wash and clean yourself in his or her own home, just because you asked or pleaded.

#18: Receive an animal from the Beloved One (a piglet, swine, goat, sheep or young dog) and leave the local community for at least 14 days. Return with the entrusted animal alive and well.

#19: Live a beggar's life till the next full moon (means: spend only money you have received as alms).

#20: Bring to the Beloved one a non-believer that is willing to hear of the Loving Mother with an open heart.

The Merchants of the Black Galleys

"(...) but (...) its reputation is bad because of the black three-banked galleys that sail to it with rubies from no clearly named shore. (...)

(...). The mouths of the men who came from it to trade were too wide, and the way their turbans were humped up in two points above their foreheads was in especially bad taste. And their shoes were the shortest and queerest ever seen. (...)

(...) And the odors from those galleys which the south wind blew in from the wharves are not to be described. (...)"

[From *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*; by H.P. Lovecraft]

In the 16th and 17th century, there were not that many vessels of the orient that frequented the ports of England, Germany, The United Provinces, France, Spain or Portugal. Those that did arrive in the ports of these nations often were Turkish, and the strange ways of the bewildering merchants and sailors from this country were looked upon with suspicion. After all, they were not good Christians! These are the basic assumptions of mine that I used to create my version of the Merchants of the Black Galleys (blatantly ripped from H.P. Lovecraft's *The Dream-Quest of Unknown Kadath*), so that they might come ashore in the lands of the Lamentations of the Flame Princess, too.

Nerd Rage Warning: I took great liberties in fleshing out what H.P. Lovecraft has written about the Merchants of the Black Galleys, and ultimately estranged them from their source. If this is a sacrilege to you, better do not read further...

The three-banked galleys are not really black, but of a very dark wood. It's the black sails (which they feature in addition to the rows of oars) that gave them their moniker, as well as the swarthy faces of the merchants that they bring ashore. Those merchants have long chin beards, unpleasant thin voices and thin teeth. They trade in rubies, and rubies alone. None of them ever buys any wares, and they only accept payment in gold. On a rare occasion, one of them may personally sell an item of his homeland. This will never happen at the market, but in the taverns near the harbor, where one or more might be found while a Black Galley is at anchor.

Those that approach and try to mingle with them might be offered one of these often unique items. In fact, they seem to haggle about those with glee once the ice has been broken.

Nobody has ever been invited onto their ships, and the few officials that actually inspected a Black Galley in port (instead of accepting a bribe in rubies) returned from them with a dulled gaze, only saying that all would be in order, without going into details.

What the majority of the people in Europe are unaware of is that these merchants are known to the Turks and the rest of the Orient as well, but they are strangers to them, too. They only come to ports with a slave market. There, they buy the biggest slaves that are offered, the strongest laborers and the fattest eunuchs, and always pay in gold. Nobody knows where their home port is. Would anybody ever follow their ship, they would see them move onto the high sea, and after a night has passed they would not be seen anymore. Just like the ocean would have swallowed them. They do not hail from the Orient nor from any other place on earth. The slaves, they bring to their masters, who worship the Outer Gods.

Merchants of the Black Galleys are equal to Specialists of level 0 to 3. Their skill points are usually assigned to *Languages*, and sometimes to *Sleight of Hand* and *Stealth* as well. There is a 5 in 6 chance that they have learned one random 1st level Magic-User spell for 2 skill points (instead of having allocated the points to skills instead).

Their caftan, turban and pointed shoes hide devilish features: from their heads sprout a pair of little horns akin to that of goats, they have no feet but hooves, a short tail grows out of their lower back and their legs are like that of a goat as well. All in all, they look very close to the ancient Greek pictures of satyrs, but yet different.

They are immune to *Charm* and all form of mind control, and receive a +3 bonus on all saving throws to resist the effects of drugs (as those they are used to make everything on earth pale in comparison).

Items that may be offered by a Merchant from a Black Galley:

Scarlet Wine: an unlabeled bottle made of red glass that holds a rich, scarlet red wine. Those that drink from it must *Save vs. Devices* or will drink from it till they lose consciousness (if they own the bottle or are offered to drink more: when consumed in quick succession, a glass of Scarlet Wine is as potent as the same amount of hard liquor). Those that lose consciousness do not become unresponsive but end up in a highly suggestible state, while all memories of their acts blur into a feverish nightmare. This state of mind lasts for 1d4 hours. The merchant will demand no less than a piece of gold for a bottle.

Ruby Bracelet: four small red rubies, attached to a thin golden chain (which in truth is gold-plated brass). One of the four rubies hangs from a short chain while the other three are lined on a second one. Worn by a character with *Chaotic* alignment, the bracelet puts an effect akin to *Protection from Evil* onto the wearer, with a level equal to that of the character wearing it. This protection only works against creatures of the Outer Gods whose level/HD is below 4.

Any servant or creature of the Outer Gods which level/HD is 4 or greater may once per day put the wearer under the effects of a *Hold Person* spell (with a level equal to the level/HD of the servant/creature) by saying HALT in a language taught by the Outer Gods. The merchants often wear these bracelets themselves and will only part with them on a Reaction Roll result of 9+ (and then demand 2d6+2 gold in exchange).

Rappee: the merchants favor an exotic rappee that is brown-red in color and crumbles easily. They carry it in ornamented snuff boxes, and sometimes offer it to those that try to socialize with them. Sniffing the rappee calls for a *Save vs. Poison*, and on a failure the character will become light headed while a burning sensation blooms up between the eyes (-1 to all saving throws and attack rolls). If the saving throw is passed, the character will benefit from a +2 bonus on all *Saves vs. Magic and Devices* instead, but the burning sensation remains the same. In both cases the effect lasts for 1d4+2 turns, and a *Save vs. Devices* must be rolled when it wears off. If the test is failed, the character immediately consumes another does of the rappee if possible. A snuff box with 2d6+15 applications is usually sold by a merchant for 2 gp.

The Red Eyes that See are a set of two large and peculiar cut rubies. When a character that is drunk from *Scarlet Wine* lies down and puts those upon her clothed eyes, she will after a turn see strange things with the inner eye: the cosmos hazed by eerie vapors and a nebula never seen before. When the character then focuses the own thoughts on a certain area or building, her sight will race through the cosmos and the nebular to that place, which is then perceived in a rapid succession of feverish impressions before this state of vision ends abruptly. The effect is akin to the cleric spell *Divination*, but was bestowed upon by the Outer Gods. Thereby, the character is unable to hide his presence (by mundane as well as magical means) from any servant of the Outer Gods with a level/HD of 4+ for a number of days equal to the own level. Merchants will only part from a set of the *Red Eyes* for 20gp (if they possess such at all).

The Wishful Heart is a large ruby which surface reflects the light in a soft, glittering way when held just right. It is a talisman that is meant to give good luck to any undertaking that is disclosed to it. A character that handles the *Wishful Heart* for a while (at least 5 rounds) and thinks or speaks about an upcoming endeavor will become calm and confident about the matters at hand (+2 on all saving throws). The same time, the *Moral* and *Loyalty* of each and every retainer towards this character is reduced by one, even if they do not know about the *Wishful Heart*: they feel that there is some eerie change to the character in question. A *Wishful Heart* will only be sold for at least 50gp. If it is stolen, the one who did it becomes *cursed*: the thief will be unwilling to give away the *Wishful Heart*, no matter what, and when the character's henchmen and hirelings lose their trust, a separate *Moral* check tells if those will steal from the character before parting ways.

A Most Singular Skull: a merchant offers a character the content of a small leather pouch that he wears on a string around the neck: a tiny, singular animal skull. It looks like that of a rat, yet again like that of a snake but then again not like any of the two. The merchant will explain to the character that this talisman protects against "vile spirits from the beyond". When this skull is worn on person, it does protect the wearer like a 2nd level *Protection from Evil* against all *summoned* creatures and those who are spawns of the Outer Gods if they have 3 or less HD. In turn, the character suffers from a (-1) penalty to all *Saves vs. Magic* or *Devices* as long as she wears the skull on person.

Nine Magic Items

The Bow of St. Parcival the Upright.

Parcival the Upright is an unlikely saint, for he was a bounty hunter that brought wanted men before the bailiff. He avoided to kill those whenever he could, for he steadfastly believed that *"I am not to judge, and it is better to risk the own life than to bring death to an innocent."* Daily, he prayed for guidance to the Lord, and gave the bounty to the convict's family in the few cases that he grew a hunch that somebody he turned in had been sentenced in vain. One day, he turned so unsure about somebody that he had turned in that he prayed and flagellated himself for days in search of an answer for his guilty conscience. On the third day, an angel appeared to Parcival and explained to him that the man that he turned in was indeed guilty. To spare him further grueling days and nights of doubt, God had decided to gift him with a bow touched by the spirits of all martyrs in heaven. Whenever this bow would be used to aim an arrow on somebody accused in vain or wronged by the charge he was hunted for, the archer (but only him) would hear all the martyrs bewail the choice so that the archer could halt himself from firing the arrow. Those who would fire an arrow with the bow to harm somebody wronged or innocent would have their eyes become black as coal.

The bow itself is a reflex bow made of the finest wood, light in weight and with tips of bronze plated with gold. The grip is wrapped with braided, white hair that feels like silk to the touch.

Also akin to a short bow in size, the weapon has the range of a long bow and does 1d6+2 damage. It takes a Strength of 15+ to use the bow's full potential: to those with Strength 10-14 it is just a short bow with according stats. Those with a lower Strength cannot fire the bow at all.

Also not a truly a "cursed" item, the Bow of St. Parcival counts as one in regard to the desire to use and keep it. The current "owner" of the bow stays its owner till she dies, turns blind or decides to gift the bow to somebody with a non-chaotic alignment. Afterwards, the next non-chaotic person that fires an arrow with it becomes the new owner. The "Eyes like Coal" effect is treated as a curse.

The Phylactery of Unholy Sanctuary

The phylactery is a featureless bronze locket with a thin metal lid. When it is opened, a ghostly white light shines from within. The light is as bright as that of a torch at the start, but quickly dims down to the shine of a candle. Inside of it, on a rolled up parchment only two inch wide, is a contract with a demon. Whoever signs it forfeits his or her soul in exchange for protection by the forces of hell. Numerous people have already signed this contract, and there is enough room on the paper for more.

By touching the amulet with the left hand and loudly proclaiming servitude to and protection by the forces of hell, a character that has signed the contract may evoke an effect akin to a 5th level *Protection from Evil*, that protects against any being -but- those that are *Chaotic* in nature. Magic-Users and their spells are affected by it, Elves and their spells are not.

The contract states that the signee only may call upon this protection up to three times, unless a human sacrifice is made by the signee in the name of the demon that wrote the contract. In this case, the protection of the phylactery may be called upon another three times, or a number of times equals to the level of the character that has been sacrificed (whichever is higher).

A Ring of Loving Wishes for Protection

The ring was a gift of an oriental princess to her beau. Out of pure love, she wished for him to always be safe, and that wish was so strong that it sought to hinder the gods from doing him harm. If a character of Neutral alignment wears it, all harmful clerical spells that target him or her are reduced by two levels in potency (and those reduce to zero or less are negated). If the spell's potency is not scaled by level but allows for a saving throw, it gains a +2 bonus. The effect will end for the character (and never work again for her, but for potential future owners) when she confesses love for another (fake or true) while wearing the ring. It will also fade when the wearer comes under the effect of a *Charm* spell.

The Lion Staff

An ivory quarterstaff with a sculptured grip piece that depicts a lion's head with open mouth. It is a traveler's staff from the middle east, and was carved and enchanted by a mystic in order to have something to fend of predators when wandering. The staff later came to Europe as part of a crusader's loot.

When an encounter with a mundane beast calls for a Reaction roll, the wearer of the Lion Staff may treat any *Unfriendly* reaction as *Indifferent* instead (as long as the character gives no direct reason for an unfriendly or hostile reaction). When the staff is used to attack mundane beasts, all present hostile animals must check for Moral after every attack with it, successful or not.

If "mere mundane beasts" that mutated or were made to grow to gigantic proportions are effected by the staff is up to the Referee.

The Purse of Judas

A simple, worn leather purse, fastened with a string. While it is to be doubted that this is the actual purse of Judas Iscariot, the link between the figure of Christian mythology and the power of this magic item is obvious.

When it is filled with exactly 30 pieces of silver while being given to and accepted by a mortal target, the one who offered the purse may ask the target for a favor or service. The target then counts as being under the effect of a *Charm* spell for said request. The request must be put forth in one sentence. If the sentence is overly convoluted, the effect will not take hold and the petitioner will instead come under the effect of the curse "*Tongues of Babel*" (nobody will understand what he or she says).



Cyclone Captured in a Jar

A glass jar that contains what looks like a miniature cyclone, moving and twirling restlessly. In fact, it is a storm elemental that has been imprisoned in this container by a mighty conjurer.

When released (either by opening or destroying the jar), the elemental inside will grow into a small cyclone, that affects an area of 50' in diameter, after 1d4 rounds. If released inside a smaller room, it may blow down the walls or blow off the roof (if a storm could reasonably do so). The cyclone will last for a turn before it disperses on its own, and is strong enough to throw grown-up men to the ground. It is good to get rid of flying beasts, and a bad thing to release inside of a library.

A Magic-User that knows the *Summon* spell may cast it before releasing the elemental in order to gain control over it. The storm elemental is treated as a HD: 4 creature, and all steps but the domination roll are omitted. There are no (additional) ill-effects of losing the domination roll, but if successful the duration of the service of the storm elemental is measured in hours (instead of rounds). Never the less, it still manifests as a cyclone after its release.

Szereka's Left

Khoras, a Lich that styled himself "the Seeker of the Gorged Majesty", once clashed with Szereka, a rival lich. After he vanquished the former countess, Khoras destroyed all of her body but her left arm, the shoulder, the skull and the piece of spine that connects them to another. After subjugating the will of Szereka with his mental powers, Khoras made her stretch into the form of a grotesque spear, with a tip formed by her tightly held, pointed fingers. The arm became its shaft and the shoulder and skull formed the other end of it.

The reason why Khoras had turned her in such an awkward weapon instead of destroying her outright was her knowledge of her family line. The former countess knew all the holdings, hidden or not, all the crypts and all the traps in them. She had long used those herself as lairs or as a source for further undead soldiers to bolster her guard. This knowledge Khoras wanted to use against all of her blood and against the graves of all her ancestors, and the now enslaved mind of Szereka would answer each and any question in that regard. But the weapon that once was Szereka had even more power to offer. The touch

of its tip would rob a victim permanently of one point of Constitution unless a *Save vs. Magic* would be passed, and the wearer could use the weapon for an effect akin to a *Knock* spell up to four times a day. But after each use (be it a question, a successful attack or the *Knock*), there is a chance that Szereka's will might break free again: 2d6 are rolled, and if the result is either a "2" or lower than the actual number of uses that day (resets at dawn), Khora's subjugation is overcome by the will of Szereka, and the maddened remains of the lich will then strike out against its wearer.

HD: 0 / 3 Hit Points
1d4 damage

Unable to move faster than a crawl and easy to destroy outside of a grapple.

+2 bonus to wrestling/grapple

Deathtouch (permanent Constitution damage, see above).

Copper Gauntlets of the Monastery of the Sun

In a time long forgotten, when Atlantis was at its height and its end yet to come, the Monastery of the All-Revealing Light had been founded, high in the mountains that surrounded G'Tsang. The monks venerated the sun for the light it gave, the light for the wisdom it helped to reveal and wisdom for the transcendence it could bring. The ascetic monks were philosophers, sages and recluses that decided to withdraw from the distractions of the common life as much as possible. Every dawn, every noon and every dusk they spend in meditation in the monastery's yard.

After millennia, a celestial constellation opened a gate for demons of fire and light to spill out onto this world for a hour. Those demons, beings of fury, destruction and abandon, were drawn to the monastery by its reverence to the sun. They left nothing untouched, burned every monk and every scroll till there was nothing but blackened stone, molten copper and ashes. They howled in glee before they went back to where they came from, delighted by the centuries of learning and studying they just had consumed by fire that day. But the constellation of suns that allowed those demons to pour forth also allowed the most venerated of all of the monks to transcend, and to achieve a state beyond body and beyond soul.

Before he departed from the monastery and all of his former life, he formed the cooling copper into two gauntlets, and did so with a mastery that surpassed any smith of his time. Those gauntlets were meant to give the wise a weapon, so that the enlightened mind should triumph over the destructive element of fire.

The Copper Gauntlets of the Monastery will cause an immediate gust of wind whenever a wearer with Wisdom 14+ claps his or her hands, even in an enclosed room. This gust will supernaturally quench flames, and its strength depends on the distance of the hands before clapping. The lightest clap will snuff candles flames, while a clap performed with outstretched arms will blow out a bonfire. Against all *Chaotic* beings of fire (e.g. elementals and ifrits), such a clap counts as a *Turn Undead* (with the level of the wearer) would count against Undead. Those with Wisdom 14+ will know all of this after putting on the gauntlets, and to those they glow with a soft orange hue. Snuffing any kind of fire with them gives the user a feeling of spiritual calmness.

The ol'Druid's Sickle

The ol'Druid's Sickle is a tool that has been handed down from one druid to another in the local area: a common sickle with a blade made of bronze and a bone handle that has become brown with age. The mystic powers of it are linked to the rituals and traditions it has been used in over the decades, and only a practicing druid (either a Cleric or a Specialist character) may benefit from its magic. Once per day, one of its following powers may be used:

Blood Letting: the druid may cut the victim of a poison and cause a forced bleeding (that will have the victim lose 1 hit point). This blood letting evokes the effect of a *Delay Poison*, with a level equal to the level of the druid.

Harvest: the druid may use it to cut and gather medical herbs, which powers are greatly amplified as they are reaped (see *Healing*). They still must be dried if they are to be preserved.

Healing: when the druid chews medical herbs that were harvested with the sickle before (see above) and applies them to an open wound, he or she may evoke the effect of a 1st level *Cure Light Wounds* or increase the effect of a subsequent *Cure Light Wounds* by one level.

The Grace of Venus

With monotheistic religions (be it Christianity, Islam or Judaism) came the virtue of chastity. For some, this virtue, that ~~had~~ to be adhered to, became a burden. But how to escape this burden when everyone around you expects (or even insists) to adhere to it? Secrecy is the answer, and that which is hidden is often what is forbidden, and the two things become mingled up by this common fact till they are soon as one.

In a harbor town, there is a woman named Harva that runs a secret brothel. A secret one, for it is located right inside of the city walls (instead outside of it, as the local laws call for) and right in the house that her late husband, a wealthy merchant, had left her. She used her standing in and knowledge of the more "sophisticated" circles of the city to build up her enterprise. To give it a guise of something more than a mere brothel, she invented her own "Cult of the Venus", based on a few tidbits she had learned as well as on her knowledge about the carnal desires of men. One by one she replaced her servants with "maids" that would serve her trade, and her only manservant is one who will not speak, for his manners are to be found wanting and his way of speaking would reveal that he might be more at home on a ship than in a house.

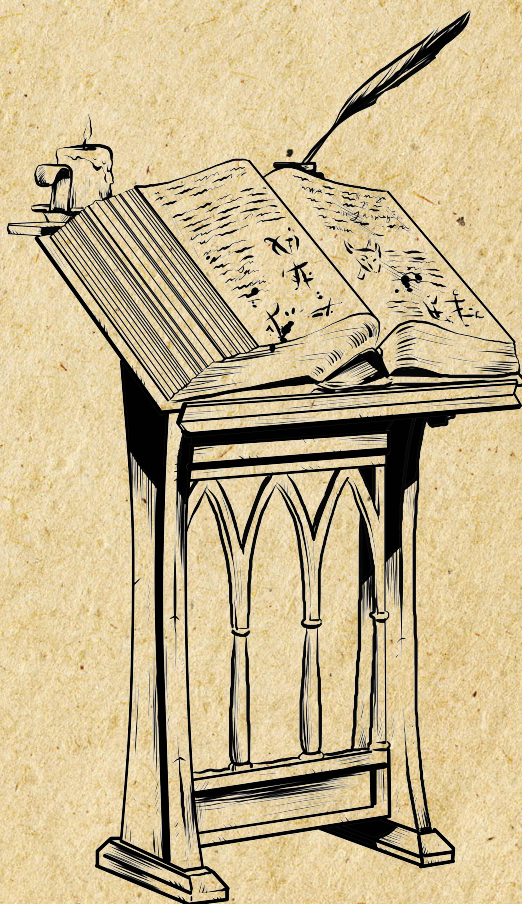
The attendance to the ceremonies are of course free for the celebrants, but in order to maintain the cult, donations of the members are necessary. Donations she asks them for in private, days after the act, and with the inclusion that she not only asks for those "to provide for the room, the incenses, the spiced wine and the other pleasures" (the women, some of whom are street walkers she washes and perfumes in her house the day before) but also for bribes "to make sure that the church and the inquisition will never-ever learn of this". The latter is usually enough to scare any freeloader into line. Of course, her expanses are not half as high as she claims. Some may guess that, but nobody will ever know for sure. And the ceremonies of the Cult of Venus ~~are~~ a true delight.

At one point, a secretive wizard going by the name of Deserius joint one of the ceremonies, mostly to learn about this "cult" and what it would be all be about. As Harva approached him for "the talk" after the ceremony, Deserius offered her ~~true~~ magic instead of coin. What he wanted in return was a woman to be send to him, and that NOBODY should ask for her when she would not return. What he offered was the

ability to read the mind of every man and woman at her ceremonies. He proofed to her that he was not a fraud, and threatened her with "*all of the plagues hell has to offer*" if she would dare to reject the deal. "Priestess Harva" was scared of Deserius, and arranged for what he wanted, and did so twice in fact. The first time before Deserius gave her the agreed upon price, the second time as he demanded it once more "*to save your soul from what now pays attention to you*".

Deserius gifted Harva a magical artifact he owned: a bronze hip chain with a diamond at its center (which would rest very low on the groin when worn). When a person wears this jewelry, and nothing but this jewelry, she becomes able to read the minds of everybody in the vicinity. The diamond gains a red glint when this power is put to use (which Harva has passed for "the grace of Venus" ever since). At first, the item grants the wearer only access to surface thoughts of the targets, or knowledge regarding affairs that are either urgent matters or daily business. After concentrating on a target for a turn, the wearer may gain access to all memories.

A target that is aware of the powers of the jewelry (or at least suspects that *something* is going on) may resist with a successful *Save vs. Devices*. This calls for a modicum of concentration and cannot be done by a character that currently casts a spell, is engaged in combat or has sex.



= The Three Bridge Tunnels =

[Master Leicester has a blog](#) where he collects his rambles. One of them is a splendid idea indeed: [the 30 Minute Dungeon](#). In short, it is about writing a hook for a dungeon with three empty rooms, two traps, two combat encounters, one NPC to interact with, one weird thing to fool around with, one magic item and some other loot as reward. I tried it at once after reading it, but my very first attempt (a thing about a hamlet, where each of the cottages would be a room/encounter) was a failure: it took myself much longer than 30 minutes to put it all down. I will perhaps finish it later. I started again instead, and then made it: a little "dungeon" in 30 minutes. Well, sort of. It is a bit of a railroad. I added a map and a "how to" for turning it all into a little scenario.

#Hook

The characters have to follow an old underground path to the domain of a Dwarvish city state: *the Three Bridge Tunnels*. It has been invaded by trolls lately. The dwarfs have given it up and only venture there to re-set their traps. Still, it is the only route the characters know about that will allow them to quickly travel to the reclusive dwarfs (for whatever reason; perhaps to acquire [some special gear](#)).

#Background

The dwarfs made themselves a passage across three underground rivers, with three stone bridges. All side entries to it had been blocked up. Now, trolls have broken through the blocked-up parts and are a constant threat to all that travel it. The dwarfs only patrol it to set-up their traps again. All of the walls are bricked, all of the floors are covered with stone tiles. Where the bricked walls have covered side entrances to natural tunnels and vaults, they have been broken through by the other side (by the trolls).

#Combat Encounter 1

A troll attacks the characters from one of the side paths, and more will join after 2d6 rounds of combat. After they bested two or four, the PC better run or will face another group of similar size if they don't.

#Combat Encounter 2

In a long corridor whose ceiling is secluded by darkness, a monstrous spider made its lair high above. It will attack the characters from up there by spitting sticky strands at the last in their marching order before descending.

#Empty "Room" 1

A long corridor which ceiling is secluded by darkness. The ground is covered in stone tiles.

#Empty "Room" 2

A stone bridge over an underground river. One may expect an ambush, but there is none.

#Empty "Room" 3

A stair hewed into the bare stone. It leads down for a turn, after which it opens up into another corridor that will lead to the next bridge.

#Trap 1

In a long corridor, which ceiling is secluded by darkness, stepping onto one of the central tiles that cover the ground releases a pendulum ax mounted high above. The "swwoosh" sound may warn the characters. Dwarfs, Halflings and other small folk will not be harmed, everyone else must move out of the way or will be hit in the head, throat or upper chest.

#Trap 2

One of the three bridges has a section in the middle that will drop down into the stream below if a certain weight rests on it. Dwarfish runes tell everyone to only path it "one by one", but even a sole troll or human fighter in heavy armor will still trigger it. Balancing the balustrade will by-pass the trap. Those that fall into the icy cold stream below have two chances to reach the rocky walls (with a successful *Force Doors* test) to then drag themselves back to the bridge. Those who fail, the current will sweep away into a completely water-filled, natural tunnel (means: death by drowning).

#1 NPC

The Ghost of a Dwarf guards one of the three bridges. It will warn the characters that only "Dwarfs of our clan and those they call friends" will be allowed to path. It is immune to mundane weapons and non-clerical magic, and HARD to banish due to its sense of duty. The characters will have to somehow prove to the ghost that they are friends of the Dwarfs of the city state they travel to. Having a Dwarf along will not help, as "*your clan is not allied with ours. Why shall I let you lead strangers into our domain?*". What a good proof is, is up to the Referee. The ghost automatically knows if somebody speaks the truth.

#Weird Thing To Experiment With

Under the surface of one of the rivers, something shines with a white light. It is an egg, about one foot high and with a strange, rubbery shell that feels cool to the touch. Outside of water, it will begin to shrivel after a turn, and after three turns it melts into stinking goo. If it is stored in water or watered with at least a quarter every second turn, it will not perish. The egg shines twice as bright as a torch, but without blinding. If it is punctured with a dagger, a milky liquid seeps out. If this liquid is licked, 1 hit point is restored (up to 20 hit points before the egg melts into goo). If kept watered and whole for 2d6+2 more days, a small water drake will hatch out of it. It cannot live outside of water for more than an hour, will be hungry and VICIOUS.

#Some Treasure

A skeleton of a Dwarf warrior will be found along the path. The chain mail is ripped beyond use, the shield broken and no weapon is found. The purse and the helmet are still with the skeleton. The latter is masterly crafted and worth a fine sum if sold (and a reward if handed to the clan/family the warrior belonged to). The former contains 7 gp and 27 sp.

#A Magic Item

One of the trolls the characters encounter wears an enchanted dagger as a hairpin. When it stabs or cuts flesh, it burns it as well (good for preparing meals, or for fighting things that would regenerate).

So much for the summary in the 30-Minute-Dungeon-Style! Now, how to turn it into a regular scenario for a LotFP session!

The following page contains a hand-drawn map that includes an underground route with three bridges that cross underground rives, several stairs, junctions and broken walls. The Referee simply needs to place the encounters mentioned above somewhere en route, in any order that seems to fit. "Rooms" should not be taken literally here, as a section of a corridor is just as good. The scale of the map (and thereby, the time needed to reach the end of the route) is up to the Referee as well. Likewise, the exact width of the corridors (instead of treating them as "up to scale" in reference to the map's chosen dimension). The unmapped junctions and the break-ins may be used as hooks for new adventure regions.

The Trolls



Trolls are creatures born from Chaos. They have a form close to that of man, but with elongated limbs, fur-like body hair, monstrous teeth, pointy ears and sharp claws. Their deep sitting eyes need no light, but see in thermal vision. As a further gift of the entropic powers that once have formed them, trolls have a ruinous touch: up to a

number of times per day equal to their HD, they may attempt to destroy any item they can put their hands on (1-in-6 chance per attempt; armor "attacked" this way loses one point of AC). Very old trolls that have spend decades underground may use a 5th level *Stone Shape* instead of a *Ruinous Touch*.

Move:	120'
Hit Dice:	3 - 5
AC:	12
Attacks:	2 (Claws; 1d4)
Special:	Ruinous Touch; Upon Death...
Save:	as Dwarf
Moral:	8


When a troll is killed, and the heart is not cut, pierced or eaten within 2d6 rounds... strange things may happen (d6 examples).

1-2: The skin of the troll rips apart, and a smaller troll, identical to the first, peels out of it (1 less HD; HD 0 means the troll is so frail that it dies the next round, without any upon-death-effect).

3-4: The troll's eyes gleam red for a second, and then the creature rises again while all its wounds that were not dealt by magical weapons or fire heal instantly.

5: The troll will give one last, shrieking SCREAM. Everyone hearing it must *Save vs. Magic* or will turn into a troll upon death (see 1-2).

6: Everybody within 120' of the troll corpse comes under the effect of 5th level *Chaos* spell as the chaotic energies break forth from the body. Beings of *Chaotic* alignment are not effected.



PC
start
here

X

...and go here X

The Ghost of the Dwarf should be nothing the character can deal with by mere violence. The Referee may treat him as a HD:3 ghost that is able to evoke an effect similar to a 3rd level "Protection from...; 10' Radius" at will. In this case, this Protection is "against those who try to cross the bridge". The Ghost itself is insubstantial, but its strikes feel like an icy touch (1d6 damage to Constitution). It must stay within 10' of the bridge.

An obvious way of getting an allowance to cross is the intend to bring the helmet of the fallen Dwarf (see Treasure) back to the clan. Otherwise, a vow of one kind or another could persuade the ghost. In the later case, the Referee should give the ghost the power to put a *Geas* onto a character.

Lady of Locks and Keys

The Lady of Locks and Keys appears as a tall woman. Her hair is a color between straw and hazel, and bound into a tight bun. Her skin is like parchment and covered in age spots. She wears a simple dress of discolored linen, not unlike those that women in prisons, work houses or asylums wear. Her limbs and body are shackled in iron chains that wrap around her shoulders, chest and waist, crisscross another and are locked with numerous iron padlocks. Further padlocks cover her eyes as well, with their shackles going straight through her brows, like they would be a natural part of her unnatural body. All her fingers end in old fashioned key bits made of iron. She may be called forth with *Summon the Lady of Locks and Keys*. This is a special version of the *Summon* spell (see LotFP Player Core Book p.134), with the following changes...

Step One: the Lady of Locks and Keys is a unique HD:4 entity with 12 hit points. It may only be summoned as such (see below for powers and stats).

Step Two: if the saving throw is failed, something else appears instead (Referee's choice).

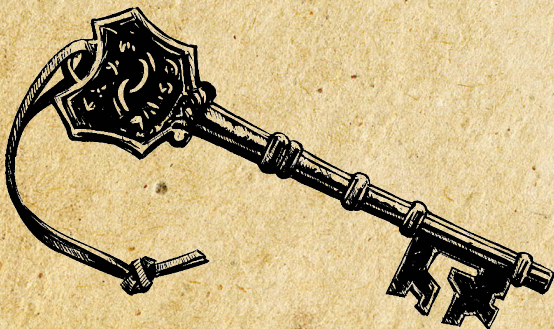
Step Three & Four: the being's appearance and powers are as stated above and below.

Step Five: when the Domination roll is failed, even by a slight Margin,... see *The Lady Unchained* below.

Sacrifices have no effect on the Dominance roll.

Thamaturgic Circles work as usual, and if a lock that dropped during a previous summoning of the Lady is made part of them, another +1 bonus per lock is gained. Using the locks in this way has all their remaining magical energy expire ("non-reusable").

After she has been summoned and dominated by a character for the first time, one of the padlocks that secure her chains will unlock and drop to the ground, 3d6+2 will remain.



The Lady of Locks and Keys once was a Magic-User, before a failed summoning had an entity she sought to master remove her from the material world and turn her into the servant-creature she now is. She can never be summoned by accident, and there is only one. The first time she is summoned in the game, the Referee should note the number of remaining padlocks. The next time she is summoned, 0-3 further padlocks will be missing (determined with a d6: 1-3 is equal to the number of padlocks now missing, 4-6 means that the number has not changed in the meanwhile). She has the following stats and special powers, and will speak about them in a pressed, whispering voice if asked by a dominating Magic-User:

Move:	90'(30')
Hit Dice / Points:	4 / 13
AC:	11
Attacks:	1 (Touch)
Special:	see below
Save:	as Magic-User
Moral:	10

Arresting Touch: in combat the Lady deals no damage, but uses a touch attack. It is equal to a *Hold Person/Monster* spell of 4th level.

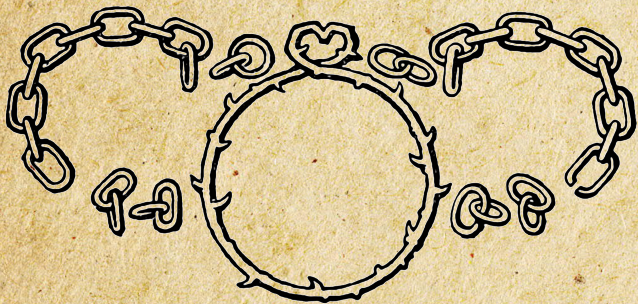
The Turning of a Key: the Lady of Locks and Keys may cast a *Knock* or *Wizard's Locks* spell of 4th level on each and every lock she touches with her key-tipped fingers, and may do so an unlimited number of times.

A locked Tongue: by touching the mouth of a mortal with one of her key-fingers, the Lady may either keep the character from speaking (about a specific topic or altogether), or force the character to speak about a specific topic unless the target *Saves vs. Magic*. The former effect may be negated by either *Remove Curse* or *Dispel Magic*.

A locked Memory: by touching the forehead of a character, the Lady may either "lock" a certain memory (no more than four turns long) so that the character may not access it anymore, or unlock a blocked memory. The former effect may be negated by either *Remove Curse* or *Dispel Magic*.

A Lady under Lock and Key: once dominated, the Magic-User does not need to concentrate on controlling the Lady. She will obey the given orders, and otherwise follow the Magic-User around. If the dominating character opens and removes one of the padlocks that shackle her (which said character may do without a key,), the duration of her service is increased by 2 turns, unless the Lady comes free. The memory of the latter possibility the Lady has locked away from herself, so

that she may not reveal it to her summoners anymore. Whenever a padlock is removed in this fashion, it rusts in seconds and falls apart. The Referee then rolls a 1d8. If the new result is bigger than the number of remaining padlocks, all of them will snap open, one by one, and the Lady of Locks and Keys is finally released from the chains that bind her.



The Lady Unchained

The Lady of Locks and Keys may not be summoned anymore more from this point on, as her torment and slavery has finally ended. Her last act will be one of blind vengeance against the fool that released her... (1d12):

01# The Magic-User becomes *cursed*, and will no longer be able to lock anything. The lock in question (or the key inside the lock) will get stuck or become jammed.

02# The character will feel a dull pain in the middle of the tongue, accompanied by a taste of metal and the feeling of having a foreign object resting on the it. A small lock has manifested there, right through the tongue, and keeps it locked. Until the lock is removed by either *Dispel Magic* or *Remove Curse*, the character will be unable to speak.

03# The character will briefly feel a dull pain in the genitalia, and then a foreign object there as well as the pull of a small weight. A small lock has manifested there... See above, but the character is "merely" unable to have sex (and urinating will be... awkward).

04# A small padlock manifests over one of the character's eyes, its shackle goes right through the brow. Until the lock is removed by either *Dispel Magic* or *Remove Curse*, the character's vision is impaired, which leads to a (-1) penalty to melee and a (-3) penalty to all ranged attacks.

05# The character will briefly feel a dull pain at the heart as a tiny padlock manifests there. Until it is removed by either *Dispel Magic* or *Remove Curse*, the Magic-User will be unable to have any emotions aside from fear. Charisma will be halved, and an additional (-2) penalty is imposed on all *Saves vs. Death*. As a positive side effect, the character is now immune against all forms of *Charm*.

06# The character will feel a sudden, dull pain at the back of the head as a small padlock appears there. The character's ability to learn is now locked: no experience is gained and no new spells may be learned until the padlock is removed by either *Dispel Magic* or *Remove Curse*.

07# The character becomes *cursed*, and will suffer a cumulative (-1) penalty to all rolls for every key she carries on person (max. penalty: -4)

08# The Lady hands a *cursed key* to the character, as her "passing gift". The key is made of brass, looks like a skeleton key and has a 2 in 6 chance of opening any given, non-magical lock. The wielder's presence will come to the attention of any potentially ill-meaning being in the wider area*, and all attempts to sneak upon somebody by the character with the key will fail automatically.

**The Referee does not have to check for wandering monsters anymore... they WILL appear)*

09-12# The Magic-User must *Save vs. Magic*. On a failure, the chains that came off the Lady will now wrap around the Magic-User, and 1d20+12 new locks appear to secure them. The character then changes into the new Lord/Lady of Locks and Keys, and will from now on be summoned by the spell. The character stops being a PC from that moment on. If the saving throw is passed, nothing happens.



Ghouls

"These figures were seldom completely human, but often approached humanity in varying degree. Most of the bodies, while roughly bipedal, had a forward slumping, and a vaguely canine cast. The texture of the majority was a kind of unpleasant rubberiness. (...)

a (...)blasphemy with glaring red eyes, (...)bony claws (...), gnawing at [a] head (...). Its position was a kind of crouch, (...). (...)dog face with its pointed ears, bloodshot eyes, flat nose, and drooling lips. (...)the scaly claws, (...) the mould-caked body (...)."

[Quoted from "Pickman's Model"; by H.P. Lovecraft]

I wanted ghouls for a certain scenario, and therefore brewed up the following stats and special rules. The "paralyze touch" commonly attributed to them in many OSR games is not to my liking, but I still wanted to add some rules that would make them more than just the next HD:2 monster.

Alignment:	Chaotic
Move:	120' (40')
Hit Dice:	2
AC:	13
Attacks:	Claws & Teeth (1d4 damage)
Save:	as Specialist
Moral:	7 or equal to current number; whichever is better

Suggested XP: 35 xp



Scrawny: Hit Points are determined with 2d6 (instead of 2d8).

Dastardly: Stealth 4; Climb 3; Sneak Attack 2.

Maniacal: when a Moral check shows doubles, the ghoul (or ghouls) fall into a mad frenzy that changes their Moral to 12 for the rest of the scene.

Eater of the Dead: when corpses or heavily wounded beings are present, ghouls must pass a Moral check in order to give chase to fleeing combatants. When the check is failed, the ghouls will turn upon the dead and/or wounded instead (even their own). **Maniacal** ghouls will always choose to feast.

They can smell you: due to their keen sense of smell, a ghoul cannot be ambushed unless measures were taken to disguise the own smell (i.e. attacking downwind). Likewise, ghouls are able to pick up the scent of blood, sweat or a decaying cadaver from up to 100 feet away with a 4 in 6 chance when they spent a minute sniffing.

Dreadful: Ghouls are malice incarnate, and radiate an almost tangible sense of dread. When five or more attack at once and their opposition does not outnumber them at least 2:1, all characters that have never fought ghouls before must *Save vs. Devices* or will have their Initiative halved at the start of combat. The Initiative stays halved till the first ghoul is taken out of the fight.

If a character that is not a Fighter, Cleric or Dwarf is alone, confronted by ghouls and outnumbered at least 3:1, he or she has to *Save vs. Devices* or will come under the effect of a 3rd level Cause Fear spell.

Filthy: Wounds caused by a ghoul's claws or teeth will inflame and fester. The character needs to see a physician to have the wounds dressed, must be treated with special remedies or needs magical healing. Otherwise, the wound will not heal and the character will lose a point of Constitution per day, due to inflammation, fever and suppuration. When half of the Constitution is lost before the wound has been treated as mentioned above, amputation is the only way to save the character from death by blood poisoning within 1d4+TB days.

Realm of the Ghouls

The ghouls dwell in a realm of twilight, darkness and ruin that is connected to the world of men, and some say to other worlds as well. It is linked with it through regions where ruins, burrows, chasms and tunnels overlap with near identical counter parts in the other world. Those mergences are never in places that are well kept or bustling with life, but always in isolated locations that have been given to decay and deterioration, and are often of an unwholesome aspect. While some of those links to the Realm of Ghouls are ancient and permanent, the majority are younger than a century and disappear again at one point or another.

The realm that the ghouls now claim is not the place of their origin, if there is a such a thing. They made it their own ages ago, and there are few other dwellers or interlopers that rival their claim. The native features of this plane, which has no other name known to men as the one that links it to the ghouls, is a barren land in brown and gray, where plains of bare earth, corny sands or blasted rock are enclosed by sloped stone ridges, looming mesas and maze-like canyons. Ravines, chasms and gullies cut through the ground, the latter either end in gaping holes or in sinks of dark morass. Those harbor a gnarled and thorny vegetation, that is choked by mold and beset by insects, and the ground often evaporates a foul miasma.

The light is never bright and the darkness is deep, for no star or sun shines there. Only an echo or vestige of it lends an unreal gleam to a sky, whose colors change between that of lead, milk or russet. In the wider areas of mergences with the world of men, ruins dot the landscape. Some will escape the grasp of even the most well-versed historian, but many are like those one may have found in the wider area of the site the mergence links it to, in ages and centuries past. Sometimes, one may even uncover items lost or destroyed in the real world, and there are rumors, among the few who ventured often into this place that sometimes, an item may be found there that is yet to be lost or destroyed in the realm of men.

The most unsettling of sites in the Realm of the Ghouls, aside from the depth of ghoulish burrows, are the graveyards that may be found there. These are nightmarish doublets of cemeteries that the ghouls found ways into. The opened graves outnumber those who are not, and every tree, crypt, tombstone and bush is a sinister or twisted mirror image of their counterpart on the cemetery it is linked to. There are always ghouls in such places. When one cannot find a trace of any, it means that they hide out of sight, perhaps watching what intruded their larder and contemplating what to do.

As forbidding and unwholesome as this appalling place is, it is yet traveled by men. Some come for the chance of uncovering relics that are lost to the world, others seek unspeakable bargains with the ghouls. But most make use of the bizarre mergings with their own world: distances are an obscure thing in the ghoulish kingdom, and a journey between two links to the world of men undertaken there is often the equivalent of five or ten times the distance that would otherwise have had to be traveled.

Spells for the Realm of the Ghouls

Find the Mergence

Magic-User Level 3

Duration: 5 Turns/Level

Range: Touch

The subject of this spell can find the shortest, most direct route to the nearest mergence between the Realms of Ghouls and the "real world" (whatever this term may mean for the Magic-User in question). The spell lets the target sense the correct direction that will eventually lead to the nearest mergence. Known mergences may be excluded, and the spell ends when the mergence is reached or when the duration expires (whichever happens first).

Call Ghouls

Magic-User Level 2

Duration: Instantaneous

Range: 1 mile/ level

This is one of the few spells that needs no gesturing and is not limited by encumbrance. The Magic-User concentrates, mumbles a mantra and then throws the own head back to give a ghastly scream, at the top of the lungs. This scream is audible to everything and everyone as usual, but the magic of the spell will carry it much further than the voice alone could (see range) to any ghoulish found in reach. The spell also carries the current relative location into the ghouls subconsciousness, as well as a hint of the Magic-User's personality. The ghoulish will not mistake this for the call of another ghoulish, but will recognize the likeness. If the ghoulish (or ghoulish) in question does not know the Magic-User yet, a Reaction roll determines if they will approach, and with which intent. If the ghoulish knows the Magic-User, the past experiences will determine the reaction.

It is not possible to limit the call to a certain group of ghoulish, it will always be received by all ghoulish in range, but the Magic-User may limit the strength (and thereby, range) of the call at will.

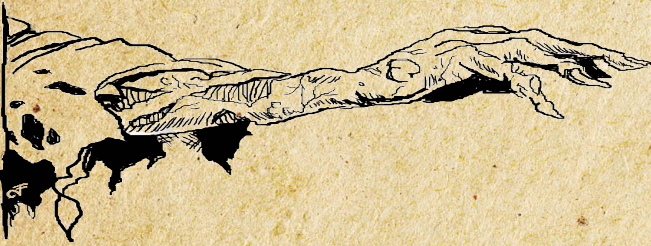
Detect Ghouls

Magic-User Level 1

Duration: 5 rounds / level

Range: 30' + 10' / level

The Magic-User becomes aware of the presence (or: absence) of ghouls within range, but not the exact location, how close they are or their exact number. The character will only learn if there are none, one, a few (up to 4), several (5-8) or many (9+).



The Shepherd

The Shepherd is a figure that appears to the ghouls in their realm, and calls them forth. It is not a ghoul, but expresses kinship with them and speaks their tongue. The Shepherd is tall, has a horse skull for a head, long limbs and an oily, gray-green skin.

He carries two mighty weapons with crooked blades, one of them a polearm, and wields magic powers as well. To those that accept his superiority and leadership, the Shepherd provides feasts, and organizes raids into the Realm of Men. A few ghouls, those that are most loyal to him and him alone, dwell in a ruin the Shepherd returns to whenever he shows himself in the Realm of the Ghouls once more. He is no god or spiritual figure to the ghouls, for they have no god and nothing about them is spiritual. He is a force that they reckon, and some bow to.

The truth about the Shepherd is that he (or she?) is a Magic-User. A human. Over the course of the own endeavors and years of study, she discovered a magic helmet, two magic weapons and some of the secrets of both the ghouls and their realm. With those, and the own magic-powers, the Magic-User took up a guise and began to establish the figure now known as the Shepherd among the ghouls. With their help, "the Shepherd" uncovers lost trinkets and relics in their realm, travels through it between points in the real world and unleashes death and terror onto his rivals and enemies. And all of this for the price of a few corpses stolen from cemeteries and a little support in a few "voyages" of his minions.

Who the warlock behind "the Shepherd" really is, is up to the Referee. Sample stats are given below, together with the three magic items that help the NPC to become "the Shepherd".

The Shepherd: 4th Level Magic-User



Hit Points: 13
AC: 12
Weapons: see below

Known 1st Level Spells: Bookspeak; Comprehend Languages; Detect Magic; Shield; Detect Ghouls; Identify;

Known 2nd Level Spells: Force of Forbidment; Locate Entrance to the Realm of the Ghouls; Invisibility; Call Ghouls;

Known 3rd Level Spells: Army of One; Find the Mergence;

The Nightmare Head is a helmet that seems to have been fashioned from a horse skull. In truth, the skull only looks like that of a horse but was one of a true "Night Mare". This helmet will *Polymorph* anyone that puts it on into the shape the ghouls know as "the Shepherd": a foot taller than before due to elongated limbs and the skull helmet now a head merged with the skin of the neck, which becomes massive in proportion. The wearer may end this transformation by putting off the helmet, but till then the character counts as a *Chaotic* being for all purposes. The wearer is also gifted with the ability to *Speak with Monsters* (as per the same spell) and gains a +2 Reaction Bonus towards all Monsters of 3 HD or lower. A *Lawful* character will never willingly put on that helmet.

The Gutspiller is a magical light weapon in the form of a crooked blade. If a corpse (or a sacrifice) of at least the size of a sheep is gutted with it and the wearer rummages in the entrails for a round, she will benefit from the effects of an *Augury* spell with a 75% success rate. The magic ability may only be used once per corpse, and only once every seven hours.

The Cutting Crook is a polearm with a heavy, crooked blade. It may be used for a magical touch attack that will place a *Hold Monster* spell on the victim for a number of rounds equal to 6 minus (HD of the target). Monsters that pass a *Save vs. Devices*, that are undead or have 5+ HD are unaffected. The *Hold Monster* effect may only be evoked once every six hours. The Cutting Crook furthermore counts as a +2 Magic Weapon against living monsters (as opposed to undead, constructs, ghostly beings, etc.)



Thoughts on Raggi's Eldritch Cock

The freebee *James Raggi's Eldritch Cock* has been out for a long time by now, and with it the new "alpha" version of possible next-edition-rules for LotFP. So, I am a little late to the party with my thoughts about them. But this will not stop me from offering them, the devil may care (or not!).

First things first, I like the new rules. They have really good concepts behind them, and I LOVE IT a lot that the designer has in mind to keep everything compatible with earlier releases.

But right there, I see a problem with the new **Hit Point progression** during "Level-Up". By the old rules, a character would slowly increase in hit points. It was safe to assume that at level 1 to 2, a character could die throughout the very first fight, but it was also safe to assume that a 4th or 5th level characters could take the first two hits in a fight and survive (unless fighting a high-damage opponent).

With the new rules, even a 5th level character with high Constitution might be stuck on "8 hit points", which means death is likely after the second hit (especially with the new changes to damage, where every weapon deals d8 of it). I think that this will limit "backward compatibility", as older high-level adventures may turn out very lethal for "the new breed of adventurers". I do not see an easy solution for this. Perhaps a "no increase" result (per the new mechanics for hit point increase) should at least give a character +1 increase in hit points for this level up (+0 for those with CON of 3-4 and +2 for those of CON 13-18). This would guarantee that there is some progression, and that seasoned veterans have more than 8 hit points.

The new **Saving Throws** feel a bit odd. The old rules had Saves against Paralyze (basically, everything agility based) and Poison/Death. How is WISDOM supposed to help with this? I would rather suggest to apply the dice-pool mechanic for generating saving throw pools to Dexterity and Constitution respectively for the Saves mentioned above. After all, a character tough like a bull but just as "smart" should have better chances to survive potential deadly physical harm than a frail bookworm.

Last but not least, I will miss **Elves and Clerics**. I won't miss Halflings, and I for sure can go without dwarfs (and at least ONE player of my group will disagree here.. and simply make small, sturdy, ax-wielding characters from that point on). I liked

Further works of mine

having a distinction between "Clerics", as the vassals of some "Order", and wizards as those who deliberately toy with "Chaos".

The Elves I will miss the most. There are some very good examples of how to portray Elves in LotFP-releases (*Weird New World* and two entries in *Scenic Dunnsmouth*) without hugging the tree-hugger cliché of old in regard to them. The non-LotFP release *Gardens of Ynn* has wonderful "Thorn Elves" as well, and the Aelf-Adal of the *Veins of the Earth* are simply "Nightmare Elves" to me. And I love them all for that. There are so many ways to re-invent them as spirits of the wild, as Thuata Dé Danann or any other less-than-cozy, non-Tolkien form of ancient beings... and with the right mindset, I still feel that they will make good player characters.

My two cents.



[20 Encounters on a Haunted Road in the Carpathians of Old](#)

[25 Encounters in the Eerie, Barbaric North](#)

[20 Sacred Sites](#)

[50 Magical Bows & Arrows](#)

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[Fantastic Cornucopia \[BUNDLE\]](#)

[Strange and Cruel Personal Titles](#)

[Works and Misfortunes of Ye Alchemist](#)

[The Dark Arts \[BUNDLE\]](#)

Other OSR titles that I recommend

[The Veins of the Earth](#) (excellent-weird-nightmarish underground setting with solid rules for light, climbing, etc.)

[The Gardens of Ynn](#) (a other-world adventure location and a fairtale-gone-grotesque-freak-garden toolkit).

[Dark Albion: the Rose War](#) (a setting that twists the historical old England with a few changes in an OSR setting with monsters and magic. Quiet the play-world!)

[England Upturn'd](#) (setting kit for the English Civil War, adventure and alternate rules for Alignment).

[Rampaging Monsters](#) (not really omni-compatible, but still a GOOD toolkit to create monster-hunt sessions)

[Lusus Naturae](#) (more bizarre monsters than you can shake a stick at)

[Obscene Serpent Religion](#) (a toolkit to create your own cult of serpent celebrants. Please take the "obscene" literally, the pictures are an explicit torture-fest)

OSR adventures that I recommend

[Scenic Dunnsmouth](#)

[The Pale Lady](#)

[The Idea from Space](#)

[The Trail of Stone and Sorrow](#)

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