

## ***The Curse of Menstaughter Manor— A town adventure for four characters levels 1-2.***

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**Author's Note:** The author hopes you enjoy this adventure as a part of a contribution to the community of *Arcana Unearthed*. Should you have any questions or comments, please feel free to send an email to me at [christianmichael.dutton@worldnet.att.net](mailto:christianmichael.dutton@worldnet.att.net) (emails with attachments are automatically deleted—sorry!).

### **Introduction**

Menstaughter Manor has always been haunted, but when two young giant boys decide to prove their bravery by going into the house, the city watch is very concerned to retrieve the boys lest the political backlash turn into something more than they bargained for!

This is an introductory adventure using *Monte Cook's Arcana Unearthed: A Variant Player's Handbook*. DM's should be familiar with that book as converting to either a 3e or 3.5 ed module may be challenging. This module is designed for a party of four characters at 1st level, 2<sup>nd</sup> at the most, but the DM can easily scale it to higher levels by introducing more monsters or advancing the ones currently in the module.

### **DM's Background**

Lucius Menstaughter was a great noble and a kind human man. He fought many wars against other petty kingdoms that declared themselves independent of

the giants' rule, but never lasted. Lucius was responsible for financing great fleets of merchant ships to ply the coastal lanes to conduct trade and commerce wherever there was a port. Many times Lucius himself would lead mariners to stop pirate incursions against Cat Watch and his fleet. The city of Cat Watch dedicated a park and built a statue in his honor for all the great deeds he's done for the people of Cat Watch. Then one day, it all changed.

Lucius was finally routing the pirates whose members were humanoid rats and eyes that glowed blood red. Lucius fought many battles, but chased one of the ships as it made its way back to its home berth on an island known as Isle of the Blood Red Moon. Lucius was determined to exterminate the pirate's haven once and for all, but did not expect to find more than even his soul could bear.

Lucius succeeded in killing the rat men to the last, and discovered the vast treasures the pirates have been hoarding for years. But the greatest treasures Lucius found was not in gold or silver or jewels, but in books. He found a small library of old books written in a long dead language. Lucius was always a bookworm and translating old texts was a great passion of his. He couldn't resist and took the books; however one of them was cursed with malevolence—*The Book of Nex Volume I*.

On the voyage home, Lucius spent his time studying the ancient text of *The Book of Nex*. He immediately knew of it as a book of occultic carnal practices, but he couldn't resist delving into its pages. Lucius easily found a reference text and translated the pages only to discover the mind-shattering horrors those pages contained were too much for him and the book bent him to its will.

The murders then began.

Four crewmen, one by one each night were found brutally and savagely murdered. The crew thought they were cursed for taking the pirates treasure and sought to appease the fates by throwing the treasure down into the bottom of the ocean but Lucius wouldn't allow them. Instead, Lucius fostered resentment and anger among the senior officers and about a day before the ship arrived at port, part of the crew who were unlucky to have given the smallest of slights to the captain been accused of the murders. With the crew as superstitious as it was, they wasted no time executing the accused crew members and sent their bodies down the sea.

Lucius arrived at Cat Watch the next day feeling empowered. He disappeared from public view by putting bars on his windows and boarding them up to keep visitors out. Three months later, disappearances of homeless, ladies-of-the-evening, and the disadvantaged were occurring at alarming rates.

Rumors of the cursed treasure began to surface, Lucius' strange behavior, and the disappearances was enough that the Cat Watch Magistrate ordered an investigation to see if there was a connection.

The investigation was hampered by internal politics, but after two months (and 30 bodies and body parts later found washing out from the sewers), a quickling faen City Watch private by the name of Jeressin Farrowstar went against orders and broke into Menstaughter Manor thinking the vital clues would be there. Not only did he find the clues he needed, he found the cause of all the disappearances and murders.

The stench of blood and rot was too strong. The servants of the manor had been mutilated and savagely cut apart like

the other murders. Instead of fleeing and alerting his superiors, Private Jeressin found courage and searched the manor for Lucius. Jeressin found him torturing the latest of his victims, a homeless man from Humantown. Lucius immediately became aware of Jeressin's presence and the graceful and kind noble that the city of Cat Watch knew and loved was no where to be found in the abomination that loomed before Jeressin.

A fight ensued and Lucius was too much of a match even in his maddened state for Private Jeressin. Then Kertick, God of Blind Dumb Luck and Head Accidents, came and granted a Private Jeressin a boon and a second chance at life (at least Private Jeressin believes this to be the case).

Lucius slipped and hit his head on a table and was out cold.

The authorities arrived to arrest Private Jeressin (one of his fellow watches snitched on him) for breaking and entering, but upon seeing that Lucius was behind the crimes that plagued the city he ended up being heralded as a hero.

At the trial, magical divination determined that Lucius Menstaughter was cursed, but nothing could cure him. The people cried for blood and the Magistrate was forced to act. They hanged Lucius and were going to bury his body in the morning, but the corpse was not there come dawn. The Magistrate ordered the body to be found. After several hours of searching no one could find any trace, magical or physical to indicate what happened to the body. Divinations failed to determine what happened and the matter was put to rest. Menstaughter Manor was to be seized, but the rumors of the curse were too great for the fearful Watch that they left the place alone.

That was 20 years ago.

Two boys, Ka-Bailud and Lu-Merge are the sons of middle nobles of influence in the city of Cat Watch. Their fathers are fierce enemies, but circumstances allowed these youngsters to be best friends when not at their studies by sneaking out and pretending to be freemen. With dreams of becoming adventurers and seeking out glory and riches, they dared each other to enter the Menstaugher Manor, for they did not believe in the stories their parents and nannies told them to scare them into behaving themselves. They were not heard from again.

That was three days ago.

High Captain Jeressin Farrowstar (now a spryte) has been tasked to find the boys, but the pressure is mounting between the two nobles, because a slip-up to either of them can cost him his career, not to mention that there are other interested parties who would spring upon this opportunity should the fathers' problems become public. Ja-Rein has been leaning on him and has demanded that he round up some "adventurer types" and bring them to his manor in the Noble Talon.

High Captain Jeressin wonders where he'll find some "adventurer types" without making this a public spectacle, he can't go through the guilds on this one. This is when he looks out the window of the Watch Barracks and sees the PC's walking by in the street..

*Hmmm.....this has to be work of Dorica, Goddess of Finding Adventurers in a Pinch, thinks the good captain.*

## **Other Problems**

Aside from the political game being played here between the two nobles and the High Captain, there are two other parties who have learned of the plight of the two young boys and are interested in finding them as well. In addition to these "interested parties", Lucius himself still exists, though as a minion of *The Book of Nex*. It is highly likely that the PC's will encounter members of these other parties, and definitely Lucius, which can get quite dangerous.

## **The Heart and Eyes Guild**

This group of cutthroats, scallywags, skulkers, and assassins are extremely feared. While they are officially outlawed and hunted on sight by the local Watch and Militia, they are too clever and powerful to be broken. Many of the ranking members of this "guild of assassins" are mysterious and take great steps to prevent any magical or normal investigations to learn of their identities. Many of the higher ranking nobles profess that the guild doesn't exist, but they fool no one, and often make deals with such lowlifes to take care of certain "problems". When the Heart and Eyes (also called the Body-takers) go to work, they can make sure that someone will be buried in an unmarked grave in the Remembrance Talon before dawn the next day and never be found again. Sometimes they will leave a message for others when a body washes out in the ocean from the sewers (while the murder of this circumstance is common, the removal of the heart and eyes is not, thus attributes to their grisly name). The Guild has sent a few unknowing agents (a bunch of thugs called the Reaver Gang) to find the boys. If the Reaver Gang finds the boys, they are to kill them at once (this is to avenge an insult that both of the nobles had given the guild).

If any of the members of the Reaver Gang is caught, they will be found dead in their cells before any questioning can occur. If the PC's take it upon themselves to question any caught members of the gang before they are taken off to the Barracks, they can only be told that a "dark cloaked" man told them to do the job and paid them 100 gp each and promised 100 gp more upon proof of their deaths.

### **Merkan the Wildstrider**

Merkan is a male litorian who has a personal score to settle with one of the nobles, Lir-Tan. Merkan is a descendant from a local tribe of litorians and Lir-Tan is an arms dealer that promised the tribe to deal with a rival litorian tribe that were attacking their livestock and hunting their lands. He promised them swords, spears, and great bows to deal with their enemies and with all the jewelry of their tribe, bought them.

The weapons were junk.

As fate would play, the rival litorian tribe invading that morning was brandishing new weapons as well, but it became evident that Lir-Tan played both sides as the weapons he sold to both parties broke and failed with little bloodshed to either tribe. The two tribes made peace that night and sent Merkan and two of his brothers as emissaries to go to the city and present their case before the Magistrate. Merkan and his two brothers swore oaths before the elders of the two tribes to bring Lir-Tan to justice.

The Magistrate heard their case and ordered an investigation. Two days later, the investigation concluded with no charges brought against Lir-Tan. It seemed that Lir-Tan managed to bribe more than one person to end the investigation.

Lir-Tan would not let the litorians go back to their tribes to later rise up or seek revenge, so he sent some hired goons to care of them, but the litorians were expecting an attack. Unfortunately, Merkan's brothers died trying to buy him time to escape. Later that day, Merkan was considered a prime suspect in his brother's murders and has been on the run from the City Militia and City Watch ever since. He knows that if he is ever caught, he will die in their prison. Merkan has managed to maintain a low profile, mainly eking out an existence in Humantown, the sewers, and some parts of Old Undercity. He dreams of the day of personally making Lir-Tan beg for his life before he rips out the giant's throat.

Merkan discovered that one of Lir-Tan's sons, the youngest, has been sneaking off to go play with another giant child. An opportunity indeed! If he can nab the child, it will be the bargaining chip he will have to make Lir-Tan come to him on his terms.

Merkan's interaction with the party will not be one of confrontation unless he has run out of options. He will attempt to pose as one of the City Watch (using a stolen cloak and badge from an encounter a long time ago when he first became an outlaw) and will make a claim to return one of the children immediately back to his father should the PC's safely recover the boys.

### **Lucius the Cursed Shadow**

*The Book of Nex Volume I* not only corrupted Lucius' mind, but managed to take his soul as well. Upon Lucius' death, his soul and truename were bound to the book and it called the spirit of Lucius into a shadowy substance ready to wreck havoc—a cursed shadow. Unfortunately,

Lucius was bound to the manor and cannot leave its grounds, so has been waiting there for 20 years until two young giant nobles came prying out the boards blocking the main doors....

### **Getting the PC's Involved**

The party is in Cat Watch because of a myriad of reasons that Cat Watch offers and its reputation for providing adventure. Any of these hooks can be of use to bring the PC's together or if they are traveling together already, to give them motivation for being here in Cat Watch.

- The PC's will need work as adventurers or mercenaries and need to find the local guildhalls to petition to be let in, so they can find employment contracts (you cannot work as an adventurer or mercenary without belonging to a guild); however, they got lost from the lousy directions a merchant or a freeman, or passerby gave them to find the guildhall they're looking for. This will lead directly to Scene 1 (see below).
- There is a local festival called the Great Passing that is five days of feasting, ceremonies, and celebrations. People come from all around the region to take part in the ceremonies. The PC's may be interested in taking part in the ceremonies or feasting, but there is no room at any of the inns and if they haven't any coin, the City Watch may be able to put them up for free if they're willing to work during part of the festival as extra guards and patrols. In this case the PC's are heading toward the Watch Barrack to make arrangements.
- The PC's are here to learn new skills and access new spells by petitioning the various learning institutions in the *Sossita Rinturia* (The Learned Talon); however, they got lost.
- If any the PC's have a character background, the DM may want to tie in an aspect of that background to being here in the city (for example, the DM tells a player, "You're father's killer was seen booking a coach passage toward the city of Cat Watch. Obviously, such a haven for shady dealings and treachery, this is of no surprise that you may finally catch the killer here").

### **Setting**

The City of Cat Watch, a small burgeoning coastal city bustling with trade, commerce, and learning, where one can come to learn a trade in the guilds, learn spellcraft at the *Stedia Migicka ne Univera* (University of Magical Studies), learn art at the *Collogia* (The College), learn the art of war at the Guild of Nine Swords, or learn watercraft. It is also a dangerous city rife with political intrigue, factions within factions, plots within plots, where assassination, blackmail, and other larcenous pursuits are commodities of their own, but while this city is rife with corruption, it maintains a strong law and order. It is a city built atop of ancient ruins of the evil dramojh hidden beneath its sewers, and many ruins dot the countryside all the way to the mountains and beyond.

The DM can set the adventure in any city along a coastline for her campaign in either the lands of the Diamond Throne or in a campaign of her own design using the setting of *Arcana Unearthed*.

## **Brief Background of Cat Watch**

The City of Cat Watch is so named for the Litorians who used to farm and hunt the lands before the dramojh came and drove them off their pastures and built a horrendous city of bellowing smoke and metal using human slaves.

For years the litorians would watch the city from their mountain retreats and passes, and ambush dramojh hunting parties. When the giants came to the continent and freed the humans and other races from their dramojh masters, the litorians were the first to lead an army into the city walls and bring the city down. The great destruction that followed allowed the litorians to take back their land until the giants settled into the city and began to rebuild it.

The litorians feeling that the giants might drive them off their lands like the previous rulers were cautious, but the giants sent envoys to the various scattered tribes to make peace with the tribes, and told the great cat people they will not despoil their land. Many of the litorian tribes accepted the offer and came from the hidden mountain passes and hideaways, while some did not were very suspicious of the giants and have remained there since then.

The giants felt that the litorians were going to hold them to their pledge and they always felt that were watched wherever the giants trod. Many of the giants who settled in the dramojh ruin always felt that a pair of eyes—catlike—were upon them, thus when the first council convened in the heart of the ruined palace, they named the city Cat Watch to remind them of their pledge and friendship to the litorians.

One hundred years later, a great dramojh of power known only as Nex returned and was determined to make the giants pay. Nex ripped the land apart with his great and destructive spells and it took the collective magical might of the giants and other races to keep those spells from outright destroying the city, but the dramojh's magic wracked the city to sink and the part of the peninsula it rested on was ripped away so that now the city of Cat Watch was along a coastline. Many of the old structures collapsed and were buried as they sank, but in a final battle Nex was banished to a prison plane. The city had to be rebuilt again.

Over time, the giants have ruled the city peacefully, but the evil of the relics buried by the former dramojh masters weigh on the hearts of many and one cannot stay the stink of such evil when they live in the bowel of it. It changes a man and makes the heart grow dark.

Two hundred years ago, political strife began wrecking the city apart as guilds, nobles, mercenaries went at each others throats in open and covert bloodshed. No place was safe anymore and no one walked anywhere without carrying a weapon they did not know how to use.

Then a prophet came.

Jodidiah was a simple runechild who was once a sibbecai. He prophesied that the bowels of the city would rupture and that the blood of the city will flow into the ocean killing the sea life all around it unless a hero comes and stay the evil of the coming darkness. A hero did come, a great litorian by the name Rashikarr, a warrior of great skill always bringing light to wherever there was darkness, for the city of Cat Watch was at the brink to be enveloped in its dark shroud once and for all.

Rashikarr sought out all the agents of strife and darkness, and rooted them out in the Old Undercity. In the battles against the darkness, many of the council rulers, guildmasters, and powerful nobility were either pawns of the evil or made last stands with Rashikarr, for in the end only Rashikarr was left standing. This brought peace and Rashikarr found himself the leader of the city as no one could contest his authority and his bravery. Rashikarr knew that he only staved off the inevitable given the fact that the relics of the past still lay hidden, but he established two things that the city has to this day in hopes that the future generations would be strong enough (stronger than he) to banish the darkness forever. He established:

1. The city be ruled by a Magistrate who must work to the greater good of the city regardless of personal sacrifice.

2. An order of champions established to serve the city in its darkest hour.

Rashikarr died only a couple of years later, the darkness that he fought took too much out of him. The city raised a great monument to him and entombed him within it. The monument rests on a hill that overlooks the city and stands to this day.

Rashikarr brought peace to this day, but even his sacrifice is beginning to become in vain as again darkness finds a way to live on and the city is again ripe with political strife. While it's not as overt as the last time 200 years ago, people who make enemies can find their bodies washing out into the ocean from the sewers the next day if they are not careful.

### **Divisions of the City and City Stats**

The city of Cat Watch is a walled city with each ward also walled. The city is partly sunken that rests even with the coastline and the rest of the coastline has been worked that it's easy to take carts back and forth from the higher elevated parts of the city to the lower parts. The city has twelve wards (called "talons" though the etymology of this word has been lost). The talons in no particular importance are:

1. West Talon—entrance into the city and usually a travelers quarter of inns and way stations.
2. Freeman's Quarter—mostly adventurers and mercenaries live here.
3. Humantown—a very poor and violent ward, but so aptly named because most of the population is human. The talon use to have another name, but only the court scribes know what it used to be called.
4. Noble Talon—talon of the nobility.
5. Guild Talon—talon of the guilds.
6. Merchant Talon—talon of the bazaars and markets.
7. Remembrance Talon—talon of shrines, cemeteries, and mausoleums to honor the dead, the fates, and the many gods of the faen.
8. High Talon—the smallest talon, but where the city is governed.
9. The Low Talon—the talon of the docks, warehouses, and ships.
10. *Sossita Rinturia* (The Learned Talon)—talon of the *Stedia Migicka ne Universa* (University of Magical Studies), the *Collogia* (The College), and The White Library (a massive library made of white marble). Other places of learning are here in this talon.

11. Smokestack Village—this talon is a ward of blacksmiths, metal smiths, and workers of all metals precious and mundane.
12. The Watch Talon—the talon that houses most of the City Watch and the City Militia.

**City of Cat Watch (Large City):**

Conventional / Nonstandard; 40,000 gp limit; Assets 2 million gp; Population 12,200 (including 1,200 troops and City Watch); Mixed (giant 10%, humans 30%, litorians 15%, sibbecai 15%, loreson faen 18%, quickling faen 3%, sprites 3%, runechildren 2%, verrik 2%, mojh 1%, other 1%).

Authority Figures: Magistrate Kar-Farlass, male giant Giant 3/Mage Blade 7/Magister 2 (ruler of the city of Cat Watch); High Captain of the Watch Jeressin Farrowstar, male spryte Spryte 3/Unfettered 12 (commanding officer of the City Watch); High General Deddina the Red, female litorian Warmain 10 (general of the City Militia)

**Scene 1: You're Under Arrest in the Name of the Magistrate!**

**Set up**—the PC's are either coming down the road together (they might know each other) or separately coming from different directions, but close enough to pass one another by to be considered a group when the guards call out for them to stop from the Watch Barracks' gates.

The pounding rain has finally stopped and you can look up to get your bearings while walking down the city streets of Cat Watch. The rain has only made the city of shady dealings, fast treachery, and an assassin's blade all the gloomier and you think that it would be

very preferable to be in a warm room with good ale right now. Your thoughts are interrupted as you slosh through the mud of the wide street surrounded by stone walls and dark looking military structures. You had hoped that the rain would at least carry away the stench of horse offal and other more vile airs, but it only feels even worse. Suddenly a whistle to your left blows and looking in the direction you see the walled compound known as the Watch Barracks, apparently the home of the City Watch, the local militia, or maybe both. The outer gates open and out come some thirty troops toward you, each wearing the garb of the City Watch. One of them, a sibbecai dressed in light armor and bright colorful tunics points at all of you and barks, "All of you must stop in the name of the High Magistrate. Resist, and you'll be placed under arrest!"

The DM should immediately tell the PC's that the guards look as if they want to talk, and not arrest anyone, because they typically will brandish weapons and manacles for arrests, but haven't done either.

The sibbecai, Blue Sergeant Ferros Mordikai, is a serious and loyal follower of Captain Jeressin, and will execute his duties to the city without question. Ferros will order the PC's that he's under direct orders to bring them before the High Captain who requests an audience with them. Ferros will look at the PC's weapons to make sure they are peace bonded (tying up the weapons to make sure they aren't quickly drawn in combat). If there is any weapon larger than a dagger that isn't peace bonded, Ferros will order his troops to peace bond the PC's weapon (the PC's aren't allowed to do this themselves). If any PC refuses to have their weapon peace bonded, Ferros will offer them a choice of

having their weapon confiscated or have it peace bonded.

Ferros will not mess with threatening or disrespectful characters. If any of the party intends to fight their way out of the situation, refuse to comply with Ferros' orders, or bluff their way out, Ferros will give them a warning and the PC's will notice that there are archers along the walls as well in addition to the 30 troops cutting off their exits. If any of the party intends to fight, well, at least the adventure was short....

If the party is very talkative and lawfully surrenders to Ferros' authority, Ferros becomes very friendly and states that they have been selected for a mission of great importance. Ferros will not say more except all will be revealed when they meet the High Captain.

It takes a full 10 minutes to reach the High Captain's Office which has a small foyer to seat guests. Ferros will ask the PC's to surrender their weapons at this point with the promise they will be promptly returned as soon as their meeting with the High Captain has concluded.

After having your weapons taken, the City Watch provide you with warm cloaks and take your damp ones to dry by a nearby fire place. The double mahogany doors to the High Captain's Office, opens and out flutters a small winged creature that could only be a spryte. The guards and the sergeant immediately snap to attention and salute the spryte. The male spryte has the regal features of a hawk and wears the dark crested blues of the City Watch and a great badge (by spryte standards) that indicates he is a very high-ranking person in the City Watch.

The figure examines each of you with a stern look of resolution and motions to Blue Sergeant Ferros. "Blue Sergeant,

you are taking our guests via carriage to Ja-Rein Hall. I shall join you shortly to ride there," the spryte commands.

Looking to you, the spryte says, "Hail travelers and welcome to the City of Cat Watch should you be new to our fair city. I am High Captain Jeressin Farrowstar. I am in need of people of your sort who would be willing to earn some gold coin should you hear out our good patron," the spryte speaks.

"Blue Sergeant Ferros will escort you to the carriage. I see that he has confiscated your weapons. They will not be returned at this moment until our business has been concluded, but I assure you that after the meeting at Ja-Rein Hall, you will have them returned to you along with any other belongings. I shall join you in a few minutes. That is all." Immediately the spryte flutters back into his office and two guards close the doors.

Blue Sergeant Ferros looks at you as if a silent command was given for you to follow him.

## Scene 2: Ja-Rein Hall

**Set-up**—the PC's are then taken by carriage to the walled talon of the Noble's Talon and in a few short minutes they arrive at a garish and opulent manor of a noble. The front outer wall near the entrance gate bears a large inscription in Common reading, "Ja-Rein Hall".

The PC's are then taken to a small study and after a few minutes, High Captain Jeressin and a giant dressed in noble refinement will enter the room

Your wait hasn't been long as the doors to the small study opens and High Captain Jeressin Farrowstar enters along with and a male giant of massive girth dressed in noble refinement. Something

tells you this is the owner of this large house.

The giant looks at you with a bit of disdain—no, disgust, and then looks at the Captain, who gives a shrug and a weak smile. A small sneer can be seen from the giant, but then turns to you.

The giant speaks in a rough tone, “Do you know who I am? Let me tell you who I am. I am the noble who given of circumstances can make miserable lives such as yours very comfortable or with a simple command, can make miserable lives such as yours spend a good deal of time in the dungeon, so listen very carefully to what I have to propose.”

“My youngest son, Ka-Bailud, has run off and is missing. I am presuming he is on one of his typical boyhood adventures with his friend, a despicable and detestable sort that goes by the name of Lu-Merge. This Lu-Merge is a trouble maker and probably put some fool idea in my son to go gallivanting about the town like typically young noble boys like to do, but Ka-Bailud is too young to be doing this sort of thing, and I need him found quietly, and returned home discreetly. As a noble, I’m involved in many of the politics of the city and have many enemies, some who would not hesitate to find my son before I do and use him as a bargaining token in some trade discussion or important noble business that rabble like you would have no ability to comprehend.”

“I need you to find my son, bring him back, and I shall give you 50 gold kings each for your effort. If you also bring me that scallywag that my son has been hanging out with, Lu-Merge, I will top you off with an extra 10 gold kings each. You are free to refuse, but should you do, I will see to it that your next employment opportunities with any of the guilds are at

the Dung Sweepers and Sewer Cleaners Guild”.

With that, the giant waves you away for a moment so that he can speak with High Captain Jeressin in private.

### **If the PC’s Accept the Offer**

Ja-Rein will have High Captain Jeressin issue them a pass to enter any of the talons after nightfall and sternly warns them that they are to keep their mission vitally secret and TELL NO ONE. Most of all, they are to never to meet with Lir-Tan. Ja-Rein will tell the PC’s that Lir-Tan probably has agents looking for Lu-Merge, and they will not react kindly to any “competition”.

Ja-Rein thinks of the party quite lowly, but if any of the party wants to bargain for more money, they must succeed in a Diplomacy Check DC 20 to gain an increase of 50%, and earns Ja-Rein’s grudging respect (he respects someone who wants to bargain for their pay). If the party wants half up-front, Ja-Rein is more agreeable to that request, but makes a threat about the party visiting the dungeons if they fail to produce results and if the noble finds out they’ve spent the money on women and booze.

The PC’s can ask Ja-Rein some questions relating to the disappearance, but if they ask him about other matters, Ja-Rein will grow impatient. Here are some of the questions the PC’s may ask Ja-Rein regarding the disappearance.

- When was your son last seen? *Three days ago in the morning after breakfast. I scolded him for not paying too much attention to his studies and he stormed out of the hall like a spoiled brat. None of the servants saw him leave.*

- Who is Lu-Merge? *Lu-Merge is the youngest bastard son of a rival of mine, Lir-Tan, a noble who is an arms dealer to various nobles and private armies of the lands. You shall have no dealings with that noble under any circumstances. Both he and his sons are double-crossing cut throats that hide behind the guise of civility.*
- Where do you think your son went? *My older sons, when they became old enough to learn the proper use of a sword and found themselves attracted to women, did what all the young nobles do, they disguise themselves as freemen and go "slumming", which means they head to the seedier parts of town to drink, gamble, and pursue other hedonistic pursuits. My son may have gone to Humantown. If you go there, you will find very little friends of any giant in that slum and you weapons better be unbonded.*
- Does your son have any other interests or hobbies that don't involve "slumming"? *Yes. My son is quite enamored with swordmaking, which is a commoner skill for the lower classes, but there is a master craftsman, a runechild, by the name Shiloirra, who the lad is quite taken with and sometimes I have found him there when he shouldn't be. I would check there as well and ask her.*
- Does your son have anyone who he is courting? *Well, officially, my son is too young to be courting anyone, but that isn't stopping him. A young lass who is the daughter of a prominent giant has caught my son's attention from time to time, but I wouldn't waste my time with her. I've already covered that angle, and he hasn't been there in the last four days.*

When the PC's leave the manor, Blue Sergeant Ferros meets them and gives

them their weapons and passes. Ferros tells the PC's that the passes are good for only three nights.

### **If the PC's Refuse**

High Captain Jeressin will look at the PC's with a warning look and tell them they should "reconsider" and that this is an opportunity to have a patronage for further employment opportunities.

If the PC's still refuse, Ja-Rein will storm out of the study and Jeressin will tell the PC's that they should come with him so they can reclaim their weapons and any other belongings that might have been taken by the Watch.

As the PC's exit the manor, they will find themselves placed under arrest and put in shackles under the charge of Refusing a Noble-born (a minor crime that carries a penalty of 50 gp and a night in the Dungeon). The PC's can forfeit equipment to pay the fine, but must still stay the night in the Dungeon. As the PC's are being taken back to the Watch Barracks, Jeressin will ask them one more time, and this time will offer them each an additional 100 gp upon completion, but if the PC's refuse again, Jeressin will be angry and charge them with another crime of Refusing an Officer of the Peace (another minor crime but with two minor crimes against the PC's, they will have to pay the fines [50 gp each], spend two days in the Dungeon, and then be taken outside the city where they are not allowed to return to the city for a month.

### **The Investigation**

The PC's will likely check out the boys' friends and will find no new information other than they haven't been seen in the last four days and that "those

two are more than likely slumming”. If the PC’s aren’t discreet in their questioning with the children of some of the nobility that live in this talon, they will draw the suspicion of the parents, nannies, and servants, who may order the PC’s to immediately leave or call the Watch.

If any of the PC’s are threatening or if their appearances are threatening, they will not be walking far in the Noble Talon before they are stopped by a troop of Watchmen (10+1d10 Sibbecai 1<sup>st</sup> level warriors led by a Red Sergeant that is typically a 3<sup>rd</sup> level Sibbecai/3<sup>rd</sup> level warrior). Even with talon passes, complaints of harassment will have the PC’s escorted out of the talon and not allowed to return.

The second lead would be to locate Shilvarra and question her. Ja-Rein will tell the PC’s that Shilvarra works in Smokestack Village, the talon where all the metal works are done. If the PC’s go to the ward, they will not have a hard time finding her place and will find her at work with many apprentices bustling about. Shilvarra is very friendly and outgoing unless the PC’s are threatening or rude and will answer any questions regarding young Ka-Bailud; however she doesn’t know much other than she hadn’t seen him in over a week, but she knows that Ka-Bailud and Lu-Merge were talking about going to “the Old House”. The Old House should be a clue the PC’s can use to later investigate.

### Scene 3: Welcome to Humantown Scum! (EL 1)

The last lead would be to go to Humantown where they hear that all the young nobles go “slumming” and see if they might find them there and ask around. If the PC’s are being upfront with

strangers they meet and ask a lot of questions in that talon, there is a 30% chance plus a cumulative 5% for each hour they are direct that will draw the attention of some thugs who will pose as “information brokers” and will only offer the PC’s the information they need but only if they are somewhere private “to be away from pryin’ eyes”. These thugs will lead the PC’s to a nearby alleyway and attempt to rob them.

### 2 Thugs (male humans 1<sup>st</sup> level warrior, hp 6,7)

For PC’s who are being discreet and paying gold to keep mouths shut, a Gather Information Check DC 15 (along with at least a 1 gp offering) is needed for them to find someone who knows of the lads the PCs speak of. Gathering information in this talon is somewhat time-consuming and it will take a full 1d4 hours before they get any kind of good information. For each 1 gp the PC’s offer to the roll, give a +2 circumstance bonus to the roll (the sky is the limit on the amount of wealth they want to part with). Consult the table below for the result (the DM should roll secretly). The PC’s can continue to Gather Information (they will have to spend gold again to get the bonuses) if they aren’t satisfied or want to continue to investigate in Humantown.

### Gather Information Table

DC	Result
15	“Yeah— <i>hiccup!</i> I know those guys! They robbed me after a card game. They hang out at the Weeping Lady Tavern on Dead Dung Lane. You gonna gut those skullwaggers?” (True. Lu-Merge and Ka-Bailud did rob this drunk after a card game and they do hang out at the tavern,

but haven't been there in some time.)

20 "You want those guys? I think they is those giant folk. Y'know them giant folk ain't welcomed around here in Humantown, don't particularly like them. Y'know you ain't the first to be asking me about them. Some o' the boys from the Reaver Gang been askin' 'bout them too. Last I heard, they took off and left the talon like they were chasin' down a flying bag of gold kings!" (True. The Reaver Gang has been looking for them and spotted the boys leaving the talon).

25 "I know who yer talkin' 'bout friend. They ain't no humans either, those are them young giant nobles comin' down here to have some fun. I tells ya that one of them is Lu-Merge, and a devil take him, that one. Up to no good on those two. I heard they braggin' on takin' on the Old House up in da Quarter (Freeman's Quarter)." (True. The person does know the two boys and has heard them bragging about going to Menstaugher Manor (called the "Old House"). If the PC's press for what the Old House is, the person will shout something about him not giving up his soul to talk about such evil things and will warn the PC's to avoid the topic. The informant will flee when possible).

30 "Oh, you're in for some trouble cuz not only is the Reaver Gang askin' 'bout them giant kids, but there's this catman (slur for Litorian) who been followin' and askin' questions too. I tell ya, I see murder in them eyes and they scares me something powerful. That catman ain't natural and I think it a demon collectin' its

due off of those no-gooders. Well, I don' think it a matter anyways. Those boys want to take on Lucius' House themselves and I's tell ya that no one goes in that accursed place and lives to tell about it." (True and False. While the informant knows of the two boys and their intentions to go to Menstaugher Manor, he is wrong about his perception about Merkan (but not so wrong about the Reavers). If the PC's ask the informant about where Lucius' House is, he tells them that's a really bad idea, but if they're determined to go, it's up in the Freeman's Quarter and is the largest house in that talon that is all boarded up. It will be easy to find).

### **Wrapping Up the Investigation**

If the PC's follow up on the "Old House" lead, but didn't meet the informant to meet the DC 30 for the Gather Information Check, it will take another Gather Information Check of DC 15 to find out enough information on the Old House (Menstaugher Manor) that will lead the PC's to Freeman's Quarter.

Any magical divination that provides definite or riddling answers to questions will be able to lead the PC's to Menstaugher Manor (albeit cryptically).

### **Scene 3: You're Being Watched My Friend (EL 0 or EL 1)**

**Set-up**—This can be either a role-playing encounter or a combat encounter depending upon preference. While the PC's are investigating and asking questions, it begins to rain hard again (reducing visibility to 60 ft) and making

the efforts of the PC's traveling about in the talon less than pleasant. As they go through the labyrinth alleys of Humantown, have each of them make a Spot Check. A litorian, Vargrish, is a Reaver Gang member who serves as the gang's lookout when out on their jobs of mugging people. Currently, Vargrish is wearing a dark cloak and is hiding from the PC's.

If this is a role-playing encounter, roll a Hide Check with a +2 modifier and any PC's who makes it spots Vargrish. Vargrish will immediately disappear in a nearby alleyway and be gone before the PC's react, but may give the impression to the party that this maybe the litorian that is asking the questions about the two noble lads. This could complicate things when the party actually meets Merkan.

If this is a combat encounter, Vargrish will assess the party's ability to fight and will fire off his light crossbow at any spellcaster types (the ones wearing no armor usually is a good clue for him). Fighting in heavy rain forces everyone to move 10 ft less than their current movement, suffer a -3 penalty to all ranged attack rolls, skill checks, and saves. In melee combat, the rain provides a 20% concealment chance that an attack will miss to anyone standing in the rain. Anyone who is under a roof or awning loses their concealment.

**Vargrish (hp 14) See Monsters and NPC's for stats**

## **Menstaugher Manor**

When the PC's find the "Old House", they see it rest on a small hillock that clearly dwarfs the other surrounding buildings. All the doors are standard wooden doors (5 hardness, 15 hp, Break DC 18) and are unlocked unless specifically stated otherwise. The ceiling height in the rooms is 15 ft unless specifically stated otherwise.

### **1<sup>st</sup> Floor**

#### **1. Gate**

You've arrived at Menstaugher Manor. It is a grand house by the standards you see here in the Freeman's Quarter with the large L-shaped manor sitting atop a small hillock with a tower on the east end. The manor looks to be in good condition with bright red brick lining along the outside of the walls except the tower. The tower is made of standard mason blocks of chiseled stone and is completely covered with vines running up the entire sides of the tower all the way to its roof.

The front entrance has a large brass-plated sign written in Common reading, "Menstaugher Manor". A double gate blocks your way, but where there use to be a chain and lock has been sawed through and the chain lies on the ground broken. Through the gates, you can clearly see an overgrown front lawn of the manor that has a cobblestone path leading up to the front steps. All the windows of the manor are completely boarded up and you can tell that the doors were boarded up, but someone has clearly pulled out the boards and apparently went in through the main entrance.

Anyone who can track can see that with a Wilderness Lore Check DC 5, two pairs of boot tracks can be seen walking up to the steps of the main entrance.

## 2. Barn and Stables

The PC's will find an empty barn, but a Search Check DC 15 will find brown stains along the horse stalls (Lucius murdered the horses in their stalls when he finished killing the servants and pulled their remains in the house).

## 3. Main Entrance

You can clearly tell someone has pried the nails out of the boards covering the main doors, but they are both exposed now and the boards lie broken on the steps.

One of the doors is opened and darkness greets you beyond. A flash of lightning shutters out of the bleak sky and you get a glimpse of a foyer within.

## 4. Foyer (EL 1)

Opening before you is a large chamber lined with crossed swords hanging on plastered stone walls that decorate this room. There are some couches that are turned over and one has been recently ripped apart.

That's not all in the foyer. Behind the ripped couch are a pack of dire rats currently waiting for the PC's to come closer. They haven't eaten in quite awhile and are much braver than normally, but if they are hit and still alive, they will flee whenever possible

**4 Dire Rats (hp 3, 4, 5, 5)**

## 5. Trophy Chamber (EL 1)

The PC's see various trophies of animals mounted on the wall when Lucius' used to hunt wild game in far away lands. He hung them in this chamber as a display of fighting prowess.

A single dire rat is in this chamber scavenging for its next meal

### Dire Rat (hp 5)

If the PC's search this chamber, they will find a secret compartment behind one of the trophies (Search Check DC 16). Inside the compartment is a small key as if it would fit a trinket box or a wardrobe closet. This key is important for the magical wardrobe in Area 33.

## 6. Parlor Room

You enter a long chamber with no other apparent exits and a boarded up window by the east wall. This looks to be a parlor room for a noble to entertain guests while they played cards or dice. The room looks relatively undisturbed.

The PC's that search this room will find several decks of playing cards stashed away on the shelves.

## 7. Menstaugher's Study and Office (EL 1)

**Set-up**—the door to this room is locked (the key is lying somewhere on the floor in Area 33). Lucius also reinforced the door (hardness 5, hp 30, Break DC 25, because he didn't want thieves breaking in his study. When the City Watch came and arrested Lucius, they didn't want to have anything to do with searching the house

and left because of the curse of the pirates' treasure that Lucius brought back with him. There is still the body of Lucius' butler (one of his first victims out of his household) lying underneath the desk. Unfortunately, the lack of a proper burial and the evil within the house has caused the body to stir once again that will attack any living thing entering the room

With the door finally opened you find yourself in a large semi-octagonal room that has a high arched ceiling consists a beautiful mural of angels smiting the forces of darkness. Between boarded up barred windows are shelves filled with various knick-knacks and books. A large cherry wood desk that spans about 10 ft across and 5 ft wide stands in the center of the chamber and a plush leather chair rests about a few feet away from the desk. Covering the floor is a faded carpet that is still plush to the touch.

The smell of an old rot is pervading in the chamber and before you can investigate the desk lurches and begins to move on its own. Suddenly the desk lifts off one side and tumbles sideways crashing into a window immediately revealing the cause of the disturbance. Turning slowly around to face you is a rotting figure with grey flesh and clothes that only a servant of a noble would wear. With eyes of hate, it begins to stumble toward you.

### **1 Zombie (hp 16)**

If the PC's search the room, they will nothing out of the ordinary other than they can tell that a painting on one of the walls is missing (Search DC 15).

**Treasure:** If the PC's set the desk back down, they can search the drawers and

find 25 sp inside a small bag. The books are but ledgers for his various financial enterprises he funded up until he returned from the pirates' defeat and contain no inherent value. The knick-knacks and trinkets carry a total value 1 gp (10 lbs worth of stuff). The curtains and carpet are too ruined to be worth anything.

### **8. Dining Hall**

A dining table for twelve guests is in the middle of the room.

### **9. Stairway to Second Level**

This stairway goes up to Area 22.

### **10. Privy**

Privy.

### **11. Kitchen and Servant's Entrance**

This is a standard kitchen with an oven, pots, pans, and cooking ware. The party will have to batter down the boards barring the rear entrance door if they want to leave this way.

### **12. Backyard**

An overgrown backyard that hasn't seen a caretaker in ages sprawls before you. Small statues of artful decoration of various races in artistic poses are chipped, worn, and some of them lie in pieces throughout the yard. A well can be seen in the northeast corner.

### **13. Well**

This well runs about 40 feet down into the ground and there is a pool of water below. Lucius used to hire

spellcasters to purify the water from contaminants. Since no one has tended the well, the water can cause disease (from its close proximity to the sewers). Anyone who drinks the rank water must make a Fort Save DC 18 or lose 1d4 Con. Any spell that removes disease and similar afflictions will cure this disease.

**Treasure:** If the party searches on the inside of the well about 10 ft down, there is a secret compartment (Search DC 16). Inside the compartment are two gems (each worth 50 gp) and a small key. This key is important to open the wardrobe in Area 33.

#### 14. Kitchen Storage and Supplies

Extra supplies, dry goods, and cooking utensils are placed here.

#### 15. Maid's Bedroom (EL 1)

The smell of an old rot is strong in this room and before you is a servant's bedroom by the simple furnishings—a bed and a dresser drawer. The fate of the servant who lived in this room is apparent as there are dark stains of splatter everywhere along the walls and bed sheets. It seemed the City Watch cared nothing for removing the victim as a skeleton clearly lies sprawled across the bed missing its head.

This is Lucius' maid who was brutally murdered by him when he came back. He left her body in her bedchamber and had taken the head elsewhere. When the City Watch came, they left the blighted manor as quickly as they came, having nothing to do with the bodies, grisly murders, and most of all—the curse of Lucius and his stolen pirates' treasure.

Unfortunately, not receiving a proper burial and with Lucius' presence in the manor, the skeleton will animate and attack the nearest PC that comes within 5 ft. of it.

**Skeleton, advanced (+2 HD, +13 hp, extra +1 attack [claw], extra +1 to Fort, Ref, and Will)**

**Treasure:** Underneath the maid's bed, is a small coffer that seems as if it was tossed under there. The coffer is locked (Open Lock DC 20), but inside was the maid's savings of 45 cp, 3 sp, and 1 gp.

#### 16. Stairwell

This stairwell descends down into the basement to Area 35.

#### 17. Butler's Bedroom

This room is similar to the maid's bedroom of the vicious display of violence here 20 years ago. There is no body and the room is in disarray.

#### 18. Minor Guest Bedroom

Artisans and expert craftsman who had traveled from afar to produce art or to work a masterwork crafts for Lucius' were often allowed to stay at the manor while they worked on their projects. They would stay here. The room is filled with dust as no one has used it in a long time.

#### 19. Cook's Bedroom (EL 1)

The door to this room is locked (Open Lock DC 15), but if the party is not quiet, the zombie (the former cook) will hear them and begin to pound on the door.

It will attack the nearest PC if the door gets open or destroyed.

**Zombie, advanced (+2 HD, 29 hp total, extra +1 to attack, extra +1 to Fort, Ref, and Will saves)**

Searching the bloodstained room reveals nothing.

## 20. Inside Garden (EL 2)

This 20 x 15 chamber is actually an open area that was supposed to have an inside garden. The windows are boarded up and a cobblestone walkway runs along the west wall to a door. The floor is filled with dirt for flowers and plants to grow, and there is a small path marked by stones laid into the dirt. The garden is long dead as the plants withered away to dried husks.

Buried under the dirt are two bodies that Lucius had murdered. If any character comes within 5 ft of the east wall. The zombies will rise from the ground and attack.

**2 Zombies, advanced (+2 HD, 29 hp total, extra +1 attack, extra +1 Fort, Ref, and Will saves)**

Treasure: One of the zombies has a necklace about its neck that is made of gold (worth 20 gp). Any PC fighting the creature or searches it after it's been destroyed can easily spot the necklace.

## 21. Exchequer's Bedroom

This room is similar to the other servant's quarters in that there are signs of a brutal murder that took place. There is no body.

This room contains a journal written by Soudin Guilder, Lucius' exchequer. The journal is easily found on a desk and the pages are splattered with blood. Most of the journal discusses Soudin's interest in his hobbies, gardening and pottery, but also discusses various duties he has to perform while Lucius is away. Most of the journal is quite boring given a servant who has an easy life until the journal dates when Lucius had returned and gives the gist of the following information:

- Lucius was a great employer to work for.
- He fought many battles against pirates and even found their secret hiding places on an island called the Island of Blood.
- A single page written in common has this note, "I know its one of the cells and it has to be word-activated, but what?" (Soudin was trying to figure out how to get into the Sealed Vault, because he wanted to see first-hand the great treasures that Lucius was reported to have, but to never take).
- Lucius came back completely changed. He was a cruel and harsh employer and Soudin felt that somehow his trip to the island had changed him, though he doesn't know what caused it.
- The last entry is Soudin writing frantically as he is trapped in his room. He cannot flee because the servant's windows were barred long time ago and he can hear the screams of Waylanna (the cook) down the hall. Soudin begs anyone

who finds his journal to avenge his murder and to hunt down Lucius.

Treasure: Soudin hid away in his room in a hollow bed post his savings (Search DC 18 to find). Inside the hollow post is a small sack containing a gem (worth 50 gp) and 3 pp.

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

### 22. Stairway to Level 1

This stairway descends to the first floor to Area 9.

### 23. Stairway to Level 3

This stairway leads to the third floor to Area 34.

### 24. Minor Guest Bedroom

This room is another guest bedroom for artisans and craftsman that Lucius hired from time to time.

### 25. Trophy Room and Practice Chamber

An impressive hall of swords, daggers, and other blades of destruction line the walls of this chamber. Banners of various tribes and nations decorate the spaces between the weapons and a large carpet spreads along the north/south axis of the chamber that indicates this is a fencing arena.

This is where Lucius and some of the local nobility would spar and train in between missions to deal with pirates and insurgent kingdoms.

The swords represent standard equipment which he and his opponents would train and the banners are some of his trophies by those tribes or petty kingdoms that stood against him. Anyone with Knowledge (heraldry) can make a DC 20 check to recognize these banners.

**Treasure:** If the PC's are interested in looting the manor, then there are six short swords, six long swords, two falchions, and 20 daggers all along the wall. The banners aren't worth anything.

### 26. Storage Room

This room was to store various linens and similar items for Lucius and his guests.

### 27. Guest Bedroom

An opulent chamber of a furnished room for a single guest stands before you. A bed with a canopy is to the west wall, a dresser drawer and a wardrobe cabinet are in the east wall, and a water basin is in the southeast corner. A small writing desk rests near the bed and a glass doorway in the north wall would lead out to a balcony, but is currently boarded up.

Lucius who entertained nobility and had them stay as guests were put up in his guest bedrooms. Because of his fame and reputation, he held audiences almost daily when he was home and many nobles took well to his hospitality. This room was situated for human-sized guests, but the ceilings are tall (15 ft.), so if Lucius had to refit the room to accommodate a giantish guest, he could do so.

When Lucius returned from the Isle of the Blood Red Moon, he stopped having guests and became a recluse as *The Book of*

*Nex* worked its tendrils of evil into his mind and soul.

**Treasure:** If the PC's want to loot each room (and not manage to get arrested), all the items in here (and other rooms) are worth a collective 100 gp on the market as much of it is moldy and somewhat ruined from lack of care; however, PC's seen walking out of Menstaugher Manor with furniture will draw the ire of the City Watch and Captain Jeressin especially, so they must be careful how they get the furniture out.

### 28. Guest Bedroom

This room is a similar human-sized guest room for nobility.

### 29. Guest Bedroom for Giant Visitors

This chamber is large enough for giantish guests who visited Lucius. The furniture is built for someone of about 10 ft in height (and weighs twice as much).

### 30. Master Guest Bedroom

This chamber was where Lucius put up guests who were important to him when he was attempting to curry favor or gain an alliance. Lucius' made his guests in this room feel especially welcomed.

The room could easily accommodate any of the races (giantish or smaller).

### 31. Meeting Room

A small 10 ft square room with a single table and some chairs adorn this room. Various weathered maps of the City of Cat Watch, the surrounding regions, and navigational charts are on the table and tacked on the walls. This seems some kind of planning room.

Lucius used this room whenever he met with a few nobles to do combat planning, particularly during the pirate attacks. The maps can be of various use to the PC's. First, it will give the PC's a +5 circumstance bonus to any Knowledge check regarding a location in the City of Cat Watch or the surrounding regions. This bonus cannot be used for any kind of gain (like to determine the best routes to circumvent the City Watch while smuggling or locations of secret places in the City of Cat Watch, like a thieves guild). Secondly, the maps will provide the best sailing routes given navigation and wind/sea currents that will reduce any sailing along the coast by 1 day (to a minimum of 1 day). Lastly, at the DM's option, Lucius was a treasure map collector and went on some treasure hunting expeditions early in his career. Those treasure maps are here in this room in the corner. A couple of the treasure maps will be marked as the treasure had been found, and a few others not marked. It is up to the DM to detail any treasure-hunting expeditions the PC's may be willing to undertake. If all the maps are sold, they will fetch 100 gp in the entirety.

### 32. Library

Books line the shelves all the way to the 15 ft ceiling. A small writing table with

a single chair stacked with books lies in the center of this room.

The books are of various treatises and essays on literature, medicine, combat, sailing, and history. The books as a whole for each subject will grant a +1 Knowledge check as long as the characters have them for reference. A collector will buy the books (there are five hundred of them) for 1 gp each (don't forget about the City Watch!).

### 33. Master Bedroom (EL 0, 3, or 4)

A large bedroom ornately filled with shelves, a table, desk, dresser drawers, wardrobe cabinets, a wash basin, and a large canopy bed stands before you.

If the PC's search the room, they will notice that one of the wardrobe cabinets is unusual (Search DC 18). The lock for the wardrobe cabinet has two holes for keys. If the PC's found the key in Area 5 (behind the trophy) and the key in Area 13 (down the well), both these keys are needed to unlock the magical secret compartment within the wardrobe; otherwise a standard Open Lock DC 20 picks the lock and inside will be clothing and boots. If the PC's have both of these keys and turn them clockwise, the wardrobe will open to reveal the normal things, but if the PC's turn the key *counterclockwise* then the PC's will hear a loud "thunk" and opening the cabinet doors will reveal a only a large book covered in black scales. This is *the Book of Nex Volume I* (see entry in New Magic Items). Another Search Check DC 10 will find the key that opens the lock door to Area 7.

Enter the Reaver Gang

If the DM is running a more investigative adventure, this encounter is optional. If not, then the Reaver Gang will arrive shortly in the manor when the PC's begin searching the room. Unless the PC's are being extraordinarily quiet in their movements and searching, the Reaver Gang will quickly hear that there is someone upstairs thinking it's the two giant boys. The Reaver Gang will not be quiet in their approach and will rush to the room. A PC by the bedroom door can make a Listen Check DC 5 to hear the Reaver Gang exiting the practice room (Area 25) and heading toward the party. The party will have one full round before the Reaver Gang arrives at the bedroom door. If the PC's have encountered Vargrith, but he managed to get away, he will be here in this fight; otherwise, use the second option.

**Reaver Gang; Vargrith (hp 14) and two Reavers (hp 12, 13); see Monsters and NPC's for stats**

OR

**Three Reaver Thugs (hp 11, 13, 14)**

Enter Lucius

If the DM decides not to run the Reaver Gang encounter, then this encounter could occur. Lucius is connected to certain rooms in his manor where he can sense life (thanks to the book). There is a one time 20% chance that allow Lucius to detect the party's presence in his former master bedroom. Should he sense the PC's presence, he will arrive in the next round and attack. If Lucius is injured, he will flee back to dungeons and draw strength from one of the two boys trapped there to deal with the PC's later.

Enter Lucius

**Treasure:** If the PC's search the room, underneath the bed is one of Lucius' coffer box for salaries he used to pay out to his servants. The coffer box is locked (Open Lock DC 20) and trapped.

**Poison Dart Trap: CR 1; mechanical, location trigger, manual reset; Atk +8 ranged (1d4 plus poison, dart); poison (DC 12 Fort save resists, 0/1d4 Con plus 1d3 Wis; Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 18**

Inside the coffer box is 329 cp, 488 sp, 102 gp, and 3 pp. There is also a *potion of lesser battle healing* (marked as such).

**33A. Master Bedroom Storage**

This storage chamber contains extra linens and other items related to keeping Lucius' bedroom clean. If the PC's are willing to move boxes and crates around, a Search Check DC 15 will find a large painting wrapped in paper. If the PC's unwrapped the painting, they see a painting of a beautiful human woman. A single brass plaque reads in Common, "Calessa Menstaugher". Calessa Menstaugher was Lucius' only wife who died giving childbirth. The child did not survive either and Lucius never married again. The pain of seeing his wife's visage bore into him and he had wrapped and stored the painting in here.

**3rd Floor**

**34. Dark Study (EL 1 or EL 4)**

The secret door to this room can be found with a Search Check DC 21. The secret door is locked (the key is in Area 39).

If the PC's haven't encountered Lucius in the master bedroom (Area 33) there is a one time 50% chance that Lucius will become aware of someone in his dark study and attack.

A large study is before you as you see a large cherry wood desk with an ornate chair behind it. The scenes of carnage and rot are evident in this room as there must be at least 20-30 skeletons that you can tell were cut down. Dried red stains have ruined the lush carpet and walls.  
Then with a cracking sound, one of the skeletons move.

Two skeletons will rise up and attack the PC's.

**Skeletons (hp 5, 6)**

If the PC's search the room, they will find that most of the furniture that used to be in this room is missing as they see spots against the walls and floor that indicated that something use to occupy that space. If any PC searches, they can find a clue to the key in Area 13. A Search DC 16 will find an inscription carved into the wall reading in Common, "IT'S IN THE WELL." Lucius wrote this to remember his keys as his memory was slowly fading away from being tormented by the book.

**Basement**

**35. Stairwell to Level 1**

This stairwell ascends to the 1st floor to Area 16.

**36. Trapped Secret Door**

The secret door to the areas east of the door is locked (Open Lock DC 20) and trapped.

**Poison Dart Trap: CR 1; mechanical, location trigger, manual reset; Atk +8 ranged (1d4 plus poison, dart); poison (DC 12 Fort save resists, 0/1d4 Con plus 1d3 Wis; Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 18**

### 37. Wine Cellar (EL 2)

The 20 ft square room used to be a wine cellar but no more as the floor is completely covered with shattered glass and purplish stains of wine covers the entire floor. Between the smashed bottles are the ruined racks that use to hold the wine, now in pieces across the floor. You wonder what kind of thing would go on a rampage, but it seems your question is answered for you as you hear the shambling of movement and glass crunching under the weight of something.

There are four zombies that will make their way to attack the PC's.

**4 Zombies (hp 16, 14, 15, 19)**

### 38. Armory

A small chamber filled with weapons that haven't seen better days litter the floor of this room. Too much moisture crept into this room and many of the weapons on the wood-rotted racks are rusted in many spots.

**Treasure:** If the PC's search the room, they will find a silvered dagger and a masterwork longsword.

### 39. Torture Chamber (EL 5 and EL 2)

**Note:** This can be a challenging encounter even for a 1<sup>st</sup> level party and if the party isn't prepared to handle the encounter, this encounter can be too challenging.

A 20 ft long, 10 ft wide chamber is before you that had blood-stained racks and various small tables with tools of torture, covered in dried gore, laid on top. The room feels eerily cold and you can see your breath in here.

This chamber was originally a secret meeting room that Lucius had set up with his most trusted allies when having to deal with the costly political intrigues in Cat Watch and couldn't afford to be seen planning. Lucius did build a dungeon to hold secret prisoners who would he later bargain with to give them their freedom in exchange for information (it's how he managed to learn of the secret pirates' haven).

Lucius is here in this room if the PC's haven't encountered him or if they have driven him off, he'll be here along with three zombies

**Lucius, cursed shadow; see Monsters and NPC for stats**

**3 Zombies (hp 16, 17, 17)**

The room has no treasure, but if the PC's search the chamber (Search DC 16), they will find a bloodied key in a stained metal bowl on one of the tables. This key opens the secret door in Area 34.

Enter Merkan

If the DM hasn't introduced Merkan yet, this is a good time. Merkan will have actually noticed the battle going on between the party and the zombies hoping the party will win but be severely weakened in the encounter. At no point will he help unless it looks like the party will lose the fight.

Merkan will be dressed as a City Watchman and after the battle will introduce himself stating that he is looking for Lir-Tan's son after hearing that the boy is missing. Merkan may give clues to the PC's that he is not what he seems, but will do his best to bluff his way through. Clever PC's may attempt to bluff Merkan's ignorance of Captain Jeressin and Sergeant Ferros (Merkan does not know either men) and immediately catch him in a lie. Merkan has no quarrel with the party and if he is found out lying, he will attempt to bluff them again stating that he was hired by Lir-Tan to get his son back. Merkan will state that he doesn't like direct methods of getting his kid back and that his "employer" often uses ruses and trickery to get his way. If the PC's agree with Merkan, Merkan will tell the PC's that if they find the boys, Merkan will take Lir-Tan's son, Lu-Merge, to his father and the party can take Ja-Rein's son, Ka-Bailud back.

If the PC's still do not believe Merkan or seem hostile, Merkan may attack if the party is particularly weakened (if the party is severely weakened, he will attack for subdual damage—Merkan doesn't want to kill anybody he doesn't have to).

If Merkan decides to flee, he may harass the PC's along the way as they try to return either of the boys back to their father (DM's discretion).

#### 40. Dungeons (EL 1)

The two giant noble boys, Ka-Bailud and Lu-Merge are trapped in one of the cells here too afraid and too weakened to leave because of Lucius. Lucius, not receiving visitors in so long, trapped the boys after they discovered the secret door in Area 36 and avoided the trap. The secret door to the dungeons was left open on purpose so Lucius would force the boys to run down there and into one of the cells, which they did quite predictably. The boys have been there since then, having finished their food two days ago and finished their drinking water today. The shadow has attacked them, slowly draining away bits of their sanity. Eventually, Lucius will grow tired of the game (just when the boys are about to die) and turn them into cursed shadow spawn.

- 40a. A cell with two decapitated skeletons.
- 40b. Empty cell.
- 40c. Empty cell, but in the back wall, there is a chalk message reading, "Behind the trophy."
- 40d. Empty cell.
- 40e. Lu-Merge and Ka-Bailud are here locked away (Open Lock DC 22). They are weakened and can barely move on their own. If the PC's provide healing and water, they can recover their strength to walk, but not do much else.
- 40f. There is another skeleton here.
- 40g. This cell has a zombie waiting to attack the first thing that opens the door.

#### **Zombie (hp 19)**

- 40h. This cell is empty but scrawled on the floor in blood is a message reading, "The Book has taken us all!"

#### 41. Sealed Vault

A large metal door blocks the entry into this room and is sealed. The door itself is locked and trapped; however the door is a false door in that it will not open at all (it has no hinges and is set into the wall). However, the true way into the room is through the dungeon cell marked 40h. By stating a keyword that Lucius knew and anyone standing in the cell is *teleported* into the sealed vault. The keyword is "Calessa".

**Poison Dart Trap (in the lock): CR 1; mechanical, location trigger, manual reset; Atk +8 ranged (1d4 plus poison, dart); poison (DC 12 Fort save resists, 0/1d4 Con plus 1d3 Wis; Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 18**

A small room is before you with no apparent exits. Dust lays thick upon the floor and upon the only table in the room, but you can tell from the gleam of your light that the table is covered with coins and other items.

**Treasure:** The table is indeed covered with coins and other treasure. On the table is 1,200 cp, 240 sp, 190 gp, 10 pp, two masterwork daggers, 2 potions of *lesser battle healing* (marked as such), a fine cut quartz worth 2 gp, an amethyst worth 20 gp, a piece of jade worth 50 gp, an agate worth 100 gp, and a 4 lb. block of gold worth 200 gp.

To exit the room, the PC's must speak the word "Calessa" again to leave.

## 42. Escape Route

Lucius always had a plan to escape quickly should he encounter a threat he couldn't handle. The secret door along the door to the sealed vault can be found with

a Search DC 16. The stairs along the passageway descend 15 ft to reach a sewer corridor and the secret door can be found with a Search DC 16.

## Concluding the Adventure

### Ja-Rein

If the PC's honor their bargain with Ja-Rein and bring *both* the boys to him, he will be quite pleased (though he will never show it). Captain Jeressin be on hand to take the PC's back to the Watch Barracks and give them their payment. Captain Jeressin will also give the PC's a letter of introduction to any of the mercenary, adventurer guilds, or colleges of magic since by law in Cat Watch, one must belong to a guild in order to be contracted to adventure within its lands. The letter of introduction will reduce the entry fees (up to the DM's discretion as to how much each guild charges and the kind of discount the letter of introduction offers).

If the PC's bring only Ja-Rein's son, Ka-Bailud, back to him, Ja-Rein will specifically mention the agreement he had with the PC's to bring them both back. Ja-Rein will refuse to compensate the PC's and orders Captain Jeressin to have them removed from the property. Captain Jeressin will tell the PC's that while Ja-Rein didn't get what he wanted, the PC's did what was best and will give them any reward he promised them (if it came to that) or offer them 100 gp each and a letter of introduction.

### Lir-Tan

If the PC's bring Lu-Merge back to Lir-Tan, he will graciously welcome the PC's as heroes and offer them 100 gp each for a reward. Lir-Tan will write a letter of

introduction for the PC's to join a guild at no cost. How the PC's then approach the matter with Ja-Rein could earn his ire.

### **Merkan**

If the PC's were convinced by Merkan to allow him to take Lu-Merge to his father, they will discover they've been deceived through either of two situations. They will discuss the assistance of the City Watch with Captain Jeressin who will deny that there is no "Merkan" who works for the City Watch (Captain Jeressin knows all the City Watch personnel himself). If Ja-Rein is present, he will find this very amusing and point out that to the PC's that it looks like Lu-Merge may remain missing for a little more time or disappear entirely, then begins to laugh about it.

The second possibility is that the PC's do not discuss the situation with Captain Jeressin, but will be summoned to the Watch Barracks after two days (if the PC's are still in town). They will discover a furious Captain Jeressin demanding to know of what happened to Lu-Merge and that the boy is still missing. This could lead to another adventure where the PC's have to go out and find Merkan and convince him to return the boy.

Merkan will indeed barter with Lir-Tan, holding his son hostage should he manage to get away with Lu-Merge. Lir-Tan will want to hire mercenaries to kill Merkan during an arranged meeting, but Merkan will be far more crafty and left to his own devices will either kill Lu-Merge or Lir-Tan to satisfy his tribe's honor.

If the PC's foiled Merkan's plan, but he manages to escape, the PC's will have earned an enemy for the rest of their lives. If they kill Merkan, eventually someone from one of the two tribes that use to feud will come looking for Merkan and will

begin investigating his death and eventually catch up to the PC's. Whether the litorians who do catch up will be in a talking mood is up to the DM.

### ***The Book of Nex Volume I***

If the PC's were unfortunate to find the book, they may be able to resist its calling for a little while and find a way to dispose of the book. The book cannot be destroyed by conventional means and it could be an adventure in of itself to find a way, but the simplest solution is that the PC's hear of a burial ground not far from Cat Watch where a group of greenbonds dispose of evil unnatural things by burying them deep into consecrated ground. The PC's can easily take the book there and for a donation of 100 gp, the greenbonds will take the book off the party's hands; however, about a month later, the PC's will hear that the ground was violated and someone (or something) dug up the book and stole it, slaying a guarding oathsworn in the process.

### **The Heart and Eyes Guild (The Bodytakers)**

Defeating the unwitting thugs in this guild's plan to have the two boys killed will have the party watched for now. The guild will be interested to see what weaknesses the characters will have and if any of them can be exploited. Should the characters prove to be a thorn in the guild's plans, they will start taking direct steps to have the characters eliminated, but as of now, they will be watched. From time to time, a random PC while in the city will notice that from a dark alleyway, someone watches her.

### **Possible Continuations for the DM**

Should the DM want to continue the adventure, there are three additional plots that can be of use.

**The Bad Seed:** Shortly thereafter the adventure concludes, they will hear of a newcomer in the city that claims to be the only daughter of Lucius Menstaugher. Apparently, Lucius fathered a child during the trying times of the piracy and when it was found out that he was the psychopathic madman responsible for the murders, the mother of Vera Menstaugher (Lucius' daughter) fled the city and went far away. On the mother's deathbed when Vera was 15, she told her the truth about her heritage and what her father had become. Vera herself went out in the world and did good wherever she went, but made her way here to claim her birthright. The City will magically investigate Vera's claim, but it will stand true, and therefore give her the estate. If the PC's did not find *The Book of Nex Volume I*, Vera will. Then the murders will begin again. It will only become a matter of time before the PC's realize that the curse that afflicted Lucius now has his daughter and must put an end to another tragic tale. The DM should use this continuation only if the PC's failed to find the book.

**Redemption:** So the book has taken root in the heart and mind of one of the PC's has it? An angel by the name of Kirdon seeks out the book, but there is another party that is also interested as well. The PC's and their afflicted comrade find themselves in a game of cat and mouse with an angel on one side and a devil on another, while the possibility of breaking free of this curse is rapidly dwindling.

**The Enemy Within:** If the PC's have pleased Ja-Rein with their performance (though he'd never let them know that), Ja-Rein will hire them to investigate his exchequer, a human servant called Herondua. Ja-Rein believes that Herondua is pilfering money and small valuables from the estate, but doesn't know that Herondua is actually an agent for Lir-Tan (and who is greedy). As soon as Ja-Rein finds out about this, the PC's are going to be in the middle of a political intrigue where the stakes are a lot higher where the two nobles are going to send their agents to settle things once and for all.

## Monsters and NPC's

**Blue Sergeant Ferros Mordikai** Medium Humanoid (Sibbecai) racial level 3/Unfettered 10; HD 3d8+6 plus 10d8+30; hp 100; Hero Points 4; Dying/Dead -3/-16; Init +4; Speed 30 ft; AC 24 (touch 18, flatfooted 20); Attacks +18/+13/+8 (+2 *keen greater battle claw* 1d8+4/17-20 x2) and +16/+11 (masterwork battle claw 1d6+2/19-20 x2), or +14/+9/+4 (+2 *keen greater battle claw* 1d8+4/17-20 x2) and +12/+7 (masterwork battle claw 1d6+2/19-20 x2) and +11 melee (bite 1d6+2), or +15 melee (sap 1d6+1 subdual), or +15 (dagger 1d4+1/19-20 x2), or +17 ranged (light crossbow 1d8); Size: 5 ft/5 ft; Fort +9, Ref +14, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 10; Skills and Feats: Gather Information +15\*, Handle Animal +5\*, Innuendo +14\*, Sneak +18\*, Tumble +13; Ambidexterity, First Strike, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Iron Will, Modify Combat Style, Rapid Strike, Sense the Unseen, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (greater battle claw)

\*+2 racial bonus figured in

Racial Abilities: Bite feat, Low-light vision, Scent

Unfettered Abilities: Evasion, Parry, Parry Ranged Attacks, Sneak Attack +2d6

Gear: +2 *keen greater battle claw*, masterwork battle claw, +2 *leather coat*, badge and cloak of rank, whistle, sap, light crossbow with 40 bolts, 2 pairs of masterwork manacles, 50 ft silk rope, and a pouch containing 20 gp and 4 pp.

Motivation: Blue Sergeant Ferros Mordikai is second in command in the City Militia. His dedication, honor among his fellow sibbecai, and his unwavering courage, has made him the greatest choice for Captain Jeressin, and should the High Watch Captain retire or be killed, it is highly likely that Ferros will succeed, but he only

looks at obtaining the position as a great honor, not an ambition. Ferros works hard at keeping the peace and making the city as great as it can be. He is a little contemptuous of the human watchmen as he has the most discipline problems and considers them mostly unreliable. When Ferros goes out on patrol, he typically takes a contingent made up of only sibbecai watchmen.

**City Watchman, Human** Medium Humanoid (Human) Warrior 1; CR ½; HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Dying/Dead -1/-13; Init +0; Speed 20 ft; AC 17/18 vs. swords (touch 11, flatfooted 16); Attacks +3 (longsword 1d8+2/19-20 x2), or +2 melee (sap 1d6+1 subdual), or +2 (dagger 1d4+1/19-20 x2), or +2 ranged (light crossbow 1d8), ; Size: 5 ft/5 ft; Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1 Str 13, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 10; Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Intimidate +3; Natural Swordsman, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Gear: longsword, dagger, sap, beastscale armor, long shield, manacles, 50 ft rope, badge and cloak of rank, whistle, 10 ft pole with lantern on end (night watchmen only), pouch with 2d10 sp

Motivation: A typical human city watchman of Cat Watch is only partially interested in keeping the peace, oftentimes they like to harass newcomers, demand bribes, and gamble. When a watchman has to deal with an unruly situation, they typically use their saps unless confronted with someone brandishing weapons or a more powerful foe.

**City Watchman, Sibbecai** Medium Humanoid (Sibbecai) Warrior 1; CR ½; HD 1d8+2; hp 6; Dying/Dead -2/-15; Init +1; Speed 20 ft; AC 18/19 vs. swords (touch 12, flatfooted 16); Attacks +3 (longsword 1d8+2/19-20 x2), or +2 melee (sap 1d6+1 subdual), or +2 (dagger 1d4+1/19-20 x2),

or +3 ranged (light crossbow 1d8); Size: 5 ft/5 ft; Fort +4, Ref +3, Will -1 Str 13, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 7, Wis 9, Cha 10; Skills and Feats: Intimidate +4; Natural Swordsman, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Gear: longsword, dagger, sap, beastscale armor, long shield, manacles, 50 ft rope, badge and cloak of rank, whistle, 10 ft pole with lantern on end (night watchmen only), pouch with 2d10 sp

Motivation: While not very intelligent, they are fiercely dedicated to their job. They are trained to know trouble when they see it, but leave the technicalities and more complex problems to their sergeants and commanders. A sibbecai watchman's prime motivation is to keep the peace.

**Dire Rat Small Animal** CR 1/3; HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Dying/Dead -1/-12; Init +3; Speed 40 ft; AC 15 (touch 14, flatfooted 12); Attacks +4 melee (bite 1d4 plus disease); Space/Reach: 5 ft/5 ft; SA disease Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +3 Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 14; Skills and Feats: Climb +11, Hide +8, Listen +4, Sneak +4, Spot +4; Alertness, Weapon Finesse Disease (Ex): Filth Fever—bite, Fortitude DC 11, incubation period 1d3 days, damage 1d3 Dex and 1d3 Con. The save DC is Constitution-based.

Skills: Dire rats have a +8 racial bonus on Swim checks. Dire rats have a +8 racial bonus on Climb checks and can always take 10 on Climb checks, even if rushed or threatened.

**High Watch Captain Jeressin Farrowstar** Tiny Male Spryte racial level 3/Unfettered 10; HD 3d6+6 plus 10d8+20; hp 85; Dying/Dead -2/-15; Init +8; Speed fly 30 ft (perfect), 20 ft; AC 35/36 vs. melee attacks (touch 22, flatfooted 31); Attacks +21/+16/+11 melee (+2 flaming nunchaku 1d4-1 plus 1d6 fire), or +20/+15/+10 melee

(masterwork faen nunchaku 1d4-1), or +19/+14/+9 ranged (spryte javelin 1d3-1); Size: 5 ft/5 ft; Fort +6, Ref +15, Will +7; Str 8, Dex 20, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 10; Skills and Feats: Bluff +16, Concentration +5, Diplomacy +13, Escape Artist +21, Gather Information +13, Innuendo +10, Search +7, Sneak +16\*, Spot +5, Tumble +13; Born Leader, Defensive Stance, Expertise, Improved Critical (faen nunchaku), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Modify Combat Style, Weapon Finesse (faen nunchaku)

\*+8 racial bonus to this skill figured in.

Spell-like abilities: As 3<sup>rd</sup> level caster; At will—*detect magic*; 1/day: *charm* (heightened), *dispel magic*, *ghost sound*, *invisibility* (self only), *greater telekinesis*, *lesser glowglobe*, *suggestion*, *unknown* (self only)

Gear: +2 *flaming faen nunchaku*, +3 *leather coat*, +2 *faen round shield*, *ring of protection* +1, 2 spryte javelins, badge and cloak of rank, whistle, pouch with 14 gems (each worth 10 gp)

Motivation: Jeressin Farrowstar believes in maintaining the peace. Sometimes he circumvents the law he swore to uphold to get around “legal obstacles” when investigating crimes involving high profile persons in the city. He believes in justice and is very trusting of the giant's rule and their wisdom, but he feels that the city of Cat Watch is suffering from a cancer that he cannot stop. Captain Jeressin is often embroiled in the political intrigues and he has fewer friends than he has political allies (which could change at any moment). He would give his life for Blue Sergeant Ferros as the sergeant would gladly lay down his life for Jeressin and the city and the two trusts each other explicitly.

**Ja-Rein** Large Male Giant racial level 3/Aristocrat 6; Large Giant; HD 3d10+12 plus 6d8+24; hp 75; Dying/Dead -4/-18; Hero Points: 2; Init +0; Speed 30 ft; AC (touch 10, flatfooted ); Attacks +10/+5 (masterwork greatsword 2d6+3/19-20 x2); Size: 5 ft/10 ft; Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 16, Dex 10, Con 18, Int 16, Wis12, Cha 12; Skills and Feats: Craft (bowmaking) +8\*, Diplomacy +20\*, Gather Information +9, Intimidate +13, Knowledge (ceremony) +15, Listen +7, Perform (storytelling) +4, Sense Motive +15\*, Spot +7; Born Leader, Lightning Reflexes, Slippery Mind, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Application (Diplomacy and Gather Information)

\*+2 racial bonus to these skills figured in.

Gear: Masterwork greatsword, 120 gp (typically when the PC's encounter Ja-Rein, he will not have much on him, but should he leave his house, he will put on armor and various magical items for protection)

Motivation: The family of Ja-Rein are master bowmakers and he runs the Fletchers Guild as its Guildmaster. He believes it is only the natural order of things for the giants to rule over all the races as caretakers of the world. The humans greatly annoy him as upstart, resentful creatures that are unappreciative of what the giants have done for them. Ja-Rein uses his wealth and influence to keep the status quo and to further his own goals (usually upstarting Lir-Tan, making money, and keeping humans in the place). Ja-Rein sees Lir-Tan's son missing as an excellent opportunity to get his rival's son first to be used as some kind of bargaining chip.

**Ka-Bailud** Medium Male Giant racial level 1/Aristocrat 1; Medium Giant; HD 1d10+2 plus 1d8+2; hp 14 (2 when first encountered); Dying/Dead -2/-14; Init -1; Speed 30 ft; AC 13 (touch 9, flatfooted 13);

Attacks +4 (masterwork longsword 1d8+3/19-20 x2), or +3 (dagger 1d4+2/19-20 x2) ; Size: 5 ft/5 ft; Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2 (currently -2) Str 14, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 11 (currently 2), Cha 10; Skills and Feats: Craft (bowmaking) +6\*, Diplomacy +3\*, Gather Information +1, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (ceremony) +1, Sense Motive +3\* (currently -1); Natural Swordsman, Lightning Reflexes

\*+2 racial bonus to these skills figured in.

Gear: masterwork longsword, dagger, leather coat, long shield, empty waterskin, empty backpack, 16 gp

Motivation: Ka-Bailud is 34 years old (the equivalent of a 14 year old human) and is the son of Ja-Rein. Ka-Bailud's motivation is to seek adventure. He is often bored with his father's political intrigues and is like a lot of the other noble boys his age who want to go "slumming". His best friend is Lu-Merge, who he knows is the son of Lir-Tan, his father's hated rival, so he keeps his friendship a secret. What Ka-Bailud doesn't know is that his father does indeed know about it. Ka-Bailud will do pretty much whatever Lu-Merge wants to do from gambling and picking fights in human town. He regards humans and sibeccai as underlings who should spend more time obeying than talking.

**Lir-Tan** Large Male Giant racial level 3/Aristocrat 4/Warrior 1; Large Giant; HD 3d10+15 plus 4d8+20 plus 1d8+5; hp 76; Dying/Dead -5/-20; Hero Points: 2; Init +0; Speed 30 ft; AC 10 (touch 10, flatfooted 10); Attacks +12/+7 (masterwork falchion 2d4+4/18-20 x2); Size: 5 ft/10 ft; Fort +11, Ref +2, Will +9; Str 20, Dex 10, Con 20, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 10; Skills and Feats: Climb + 6, Craft (weaponsmithing) +9\*, Diplomacy +15\*, Gather Information +7, Intimidate +11, Jump +6, Knowledge (ceremony) +11, Listen +5, Ride +1, Sense

Motive +4\*, Spot +4; Born Leader, Skill Application (Spot and Listen), Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Iron Will

\*+2 racial bonus to these skills figured in.

Gear: Masterwork falchion, a *ring of protection* +2, 200 gp (typically when the PC's encounter Lir-Tan, he will not have much on him, but should he leave his house, he will put on armor and various magical items for protection)

Motivation: Lir-Tan is a patron of the down-trodden humans who are resentful of the giant's rule. While has a friendly demeanor, he has the vileness of a snake, and will make no hesitation to use any means of getting what he wants (while being pleasant about it). Lir-Tan never gets angry or agitated, but harbors great hatred against Ja-Rein. Lir-Tan is an arms dealer by trade and his family has a council seat at the Mercenary Guild in Cat Watch. Lir-Tan will do whatever it takes to climb to the top, his ambitions are to rule Cat Watch and subjugate the region under his dominion. He often secretly hires humans (mostly) to cause trouble and to use them as pawns in his games of intrigue.

**Lucius Menstaugher** Medium cursed shadow ; Medium Undead (Incorporeal); HD 6d12; hp 39; Init +5; Speed fly 50 ft (perfect); AC 12 (touch 12, flatfooted 11); Attacks +5 melee touch (1d6 Wis); Size: 5 ft; Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +7; Str --, Dex 13, Con --, Int 8, Wis 15, Cha 14; Skills and Feats: Hide +5\*, Listen +7, Search +4, Spot +5; Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (touch), Weapon Focus (touch)

\*In dark and shadowy areas add +8 to the hide check.

Motivation: Lucius now serves as a slave of the *Book of Nex* and prisoner to his manor.

He enjoys tormenting Lu-Merge and Ka-Bailud slowly to death.

**Lu-Merge** Medium Male Giant racial level 1/Aristocrat 1; Medium Giant; HD 1d10+2 plus 1d8+2; hp 14 (3 when first encountered); Dying/Dead -2/-14; Init -1; Speed 30 ft; AC 13 (touch 9, flatfooted 13); Attacks +4 (masterwork longsword 1d8+3/19-20 x2), or +3 (dagger 1d4+2/19-20 x2) ; Size: 5 ft/5 ft; Fort +2, Ref +1, Will +2 (currently -1) Str 14, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 11 (currently 5), Cha 10; Skills and Feats: Craft (bowmaking) +6\*, Diplomacy +3\*, Gather Information +1, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (ceremony) +1, Sense Motive +3\* (currently +0); Natural Swordsman, Lightning Reflexes

\*+2 racial bonus to these skills figured in.

Gear: masterwork longsword, dagger, leather coat, long shield, empty waterskin, empty backpack, 7 gp

Motivation: Lu-Merge is 35 years old (he is the equivalent of a 14 year old human) is definitely the leader of the two and often finds ways to get himself and Ka-Bailud in a lot of trouble that they can't handle. Lu-Merge is as pleasant as his father and has a vicious nature as well, but often doesn't show it unless in Humantown, his favorite haunt. Lu-Merge's father, Lir-Tan, does know of the boy's friendship with Ka-Bailud, and hasn't interfered for now.

**Merkan the Wildstrider** Medium Male Litorian Oathsworn 2; CR 2; HD 2d10+4; hp 18; Dying/Dead -1/-13; Init +7; Speed 30 ft; AC 14 (touch 14, flatfooted 11); Attacks +3 melee (fist 1d6+2), or +1/+1 (flurry of blows 1d6+2); Size: 5 ft/5 ft; Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8; Skills and Feats: Escape Artist +8, Intimidate +4, Jump 7, Sneak +8;

Gear: longsword, dagger, studded leather jack, round shield, 50 ft rope, sack with 20 gp

Motivation: Vargrish is one of the lookouts and bosses in the Reaver Gang. Vargrish is not stupid to confront a more powerful or organized foe and if a battle turns against him, he will not hesitate to flee leaving his comrades behind. Vargrish typically commands four to six Reavers underneath him, but sometimes does work on his own.

**Skeleton** Medium Undead CR 1/3 ; HD 1d12; hp 6; Init +5; Speed 30 ft; AC 15 (touch 11, flatfooted 14); Attacks +1 melee (claw 1d4+1); Size: 5 ft/5 ft; SQ: DR 5/bludgeoning, darkvision 60 ft, immunity to cold, undead traits; Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +2 Str 13, Dex 13, Con --, Int --, Wis 10, Cha 1; Feats: Improved Initiative

**Thug from Humantown** Medium Humanoid (Human) Warrior 1; CR 1/2; HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Dying/Dead -1/-13; Init +0; Speed 30 ft; AC 12/13 vs. swords (touch 10, flatfooted 13); Attacks +3 (shortsword 1d6+2/19-20 x2), or +2 (dagger 1d4+1/19-20 x2) ; Size: 5 ft/5 ft; Fort +2, Ref +0, Will -1 Str 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 8; Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Intimidate +3; Natural Swordsman, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (shortsword)

Gear: shortsword, dagger, leather jack, sack with 1d8 sp

Motivation: A typical thug will only attack individuals who he thinks is weaker than himself or can get the drop on a more powerful person. If a thug suffers any injury, he will run away from combat as soon as he can.

**Typical Reaver Thug** Medium Humanoid (Human) Warrior 2; CR 1; HD 2d8+2; hp 11; Dying/Dead -1/-13; Init +0; Speed 30 ft; AC 14/15 vs. swords (touch 10, flatfooted 14); Attacks +4 (longsword

1d8+2/19-20 x2), or +3 (dagger 1d4+1/19-20 x2) ; Size: 5 ft/5 ft; Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1 Str 13, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 9; Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Intimidate +4; Natural Swordsman, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Gear: longsword, dagger, studded leather jack, round shield, wineskin (with watered-down ale), sack with 1d10 gp

Motivation: A typical reaver likes to ambush their victims and leave their corpses to rot in some alley. If a reaver suffers any injury or is up against a more powerful foe, he will run away from combat as soon as he can.

**Vargrish (of the Reaver Gang)**, Medium Male Litorian Warrior 2; CR 1; HD 2d8+2; hp 14; Dying/Dead -1/-13; Init +0; Speed 30 ft; AC 16/17 vs. swords (touch 13, flatfooted 13); Attacks +4 (longsword 1d8+2/19-20 x2), or +3 (dagger 1d4+1/19-20 x2); Size: 5 ft/5 ft; Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1 Str 13, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10; Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Intimidate +5; Natural Swordsman, Weapon Focus (longsword)

Gear: longsword, dagger, studded leather jack, round shield, 50 ft rope, sack with 20 gp

Motivation: Vargrish is one of the lookouts and bosses in the Reaver Gang. Vargrish is not stupid to confront a more powerful or organized foe and if a battle turns against him, he will not hesitate to flee leaving his comrades behind. Vargrish typically commands four to six Reavers underneath him, but sometimes does work on his own.

**Zombie** Medium Undead CR 1/2; HD 2d12+3; hp 16; Init -1; Speed 30 ft (can't run); AC 11 (touch 9, flatfooted 11); Attacks +2 (slam 1d6+1); Size: 5 ft/5 ft; SQ single actions only, DR 5/slashing, darkvision 60 ft, undead traits; Fort +0, Ref

-1, Will +3 Str 12, Dex 8, Con --, Int --, Wis  
10, Cha 1; Feats: Toughness

### **Items: *The Book of Nex Volume I***

A great dramojh of horrible power known only as Nex scribed these horrific books. In life Nex details his life in pursuit of many horrendous pleasures that can only be described as crimes against all the races and his knowledge of demon summoning. The books are magical and when together (there are nine volumes total) form a horrific artifact. They also contain many horrific secrets within.

#### **Volume I – The Beginning**

This book will grant a +2 circumstantial bonus on any knowledge skill check *only* involving any matter relating to demons. It details much of Nex's early life and his dark pursuits. Reading this book causes a character to lose 1 point of Wisdom permanently, but can call upon the knowledge contained within. It takes 72 hours to read and decipher the book's maddening script.

#### ***Madness Feats***

Note: These feats are powerful and for good reason – the cost involved to have the feat can drive someone mad with the knowledge contained within the book or corrupt them on a course toward chaotic carnage and destruction. DM's who allow characters access to these feats should make it clear the penalties involved and the inherent danger to the character's soul.

##### **Know the Demon Within**

Prerequisites: Must have read the Book of Nex Volume I, 1<sup>st</sup> level character

This feat allows the character call upon a surge of horrendous strength once a day. A character who activates this feat gets a +4 enhancement bonus to strength for 3 rounds + their new strength modifier however they suffer 1d3 points of temporary Wisdom damage as the power makes them more mad-like.

Special: The character can call upon this power without having to take it as a feat, but after doing so, the character must reread the book in its entirety to be able to relearn this horrific knowledge (and thus losing another point of Wisdom permanently).

##### **Know Where the Blood Flows I**

Prerequisites: Must have read the Book of Nex Volume I, 3<sup>rd</sup> level character

This feat allows a spellcasting character to cannibalize their own blood to gain an extra spell for one time. Calling upon this feat allows the character to suffer 1d6 points of damage and 1d3 temporary Wisdom damage but is able to cast any spell they know up to a 3<sup>rd</sup> level spell. The damage cannot be healed normally and the wisdom damage will return at the normal rate of 1 point per day.

Special: The character can call upon this power without having to take it as a feat, but after doing so, the character must reread the book in its entirety to be able to relearn this horrific knowledge (and thus losing another point of Wisdom permanently).

### Dire Weapon of Blood

Prerequisites: Must have read the Book of Nex Volume I, 4<sup>th</sup> level character

This feat allows the character to inflict 1d6 points of damage to herself by cutting herself with a weapon that she wants to become a weapon of blood. A weapon of blood becomes sharper, more menacing, and does more damage. Any slashing or piercing weapon (including natural weapons) where the blood is applied has its base die increased to the next die (a weapon that does 1d8 points of damage now does 1d10) and the critical threat range is doubled (a longsword now has a threat range of 17-20/x2). The affected weapon will remain so until combat starts for 1 round + the character's Constitution modifier (the one who gave the blood). This feat can only be performed once per day and also inflicts 1d3 temporary Wisdom damage when activated. This feat takes a move-equivalent action to activate.

Special: The character can call upon this power without having to take it as a feat, but after doing so, the character must reread the book in its entirety to be able to relearn this horrific knowledge (and thus losing another point of Wisdom permanently).

**Side Effects:** The book is somewhat intelligent in that it contains a sentience of raw hatred and vileness. Any intelligent creature slowly becomes corrupted by the book's inherent nature and if fully succumbed, the creature will be bent on spreading murder and destruction wherever it goes. For each day, the book is in the possession of an intelligent creature (having more than an animal intelligence), the creature must make a Will save DC 10 plus a cumulative +1 DC per week of possession (the DM should roll secretly for these rolls). If the creature reads the book, the Will save becomes a DC 15 plus a cumulative +1 DC per day of possession. If the possessing creature calls upon the madness feats, the Will save is DC 20 plus a cumulative +1 DC per day of possession. If the creature takes a madness feat, the Will save becomes a DC 25 plus a cumulative +1 DC per hour of possession of the book. If the creature fails the saving throw, it is cursed to do horrible things, but there is a chance for redemption. Within 30 days of the book's grasp, the afflicted individual must be taken to consecrated ground and a daylong ceremony must be performed to purge the evil within the afflicted person. Also, during the ceremony, the following spells must be cast in order – *remove curse*, *remove malady*, and *perfect health*. Anyone cured from the ceremony loses any madness feats gained from the book (and must choose new ones). Anyone who is not cured after 30 days of becoming dominated by the book is beyond the reach of any mortal magics. Anyone slain while under the possession of the book, will rise to become a cursed shadow (see new monster below).

**Destroying the Book:** The book cannot be destroyed by conventional means, though through diligent research, the method for destroying the book should be simpler than any method to destroy an artifact.

**New Monster: Cursed Shadow**

Medium Undead (Incorporeal)

Hit Dice: 6d12 (39 hp)

Initiative: +5

Speed: Fly 50 ft (perfect) (10 squares)

Armor Class: 12 (+1 Dex, +1 deflection), touch 12, flat-footed 11

Base Attack/Grapple: +2/--

Attack: Incorporeal touch +5 melee (1d6 Wis)

Full Attack: Incorporeal touch +5 melee (1d6 Wis)

Space/Reach: 5 ft/5 ft.

Special Attacks: Telekinetic blast, create spawn, wisdom damage

Special Qualities: Darkvision 60 ft, incorporeal traits, undead traits

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +7

Abilities: Str--, Dex 13, Con--, Int 8, Wis 15, Cha 14

Skills: Hide +5\*, Listen +7, Search +4, Spot +5

Feats: Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (touch), Weapon Focus (touch)

Environment: Usually within 100 ft of any volume of *The Book of Nex*, but can be encountered in dark, ruined areas as well

Organization: Solitary, gang (2-5), or swarm (6-11)

Challenge Rating: 4

Treasure: None

Advancement: 7-18 HD (Medium)

Level Adjustment: --

Creatures of hate, vileness, and destruction that were once living creatures consumed by any of the volumes of *The Book of Nex* and were killed somehow have arisen again in a shadowy wispy form of their former selves to serve their dark masters (the books) for all eternity. Such is the fate of the cursed shadow.

**Wisdom Damage (Su):** the touch of a cursed shadow deals 1d6 Wisdom damage to any living creature. Any creature reduced to 0 Wisdom will die and rise as a cursed shadow under the control of its master the next day.

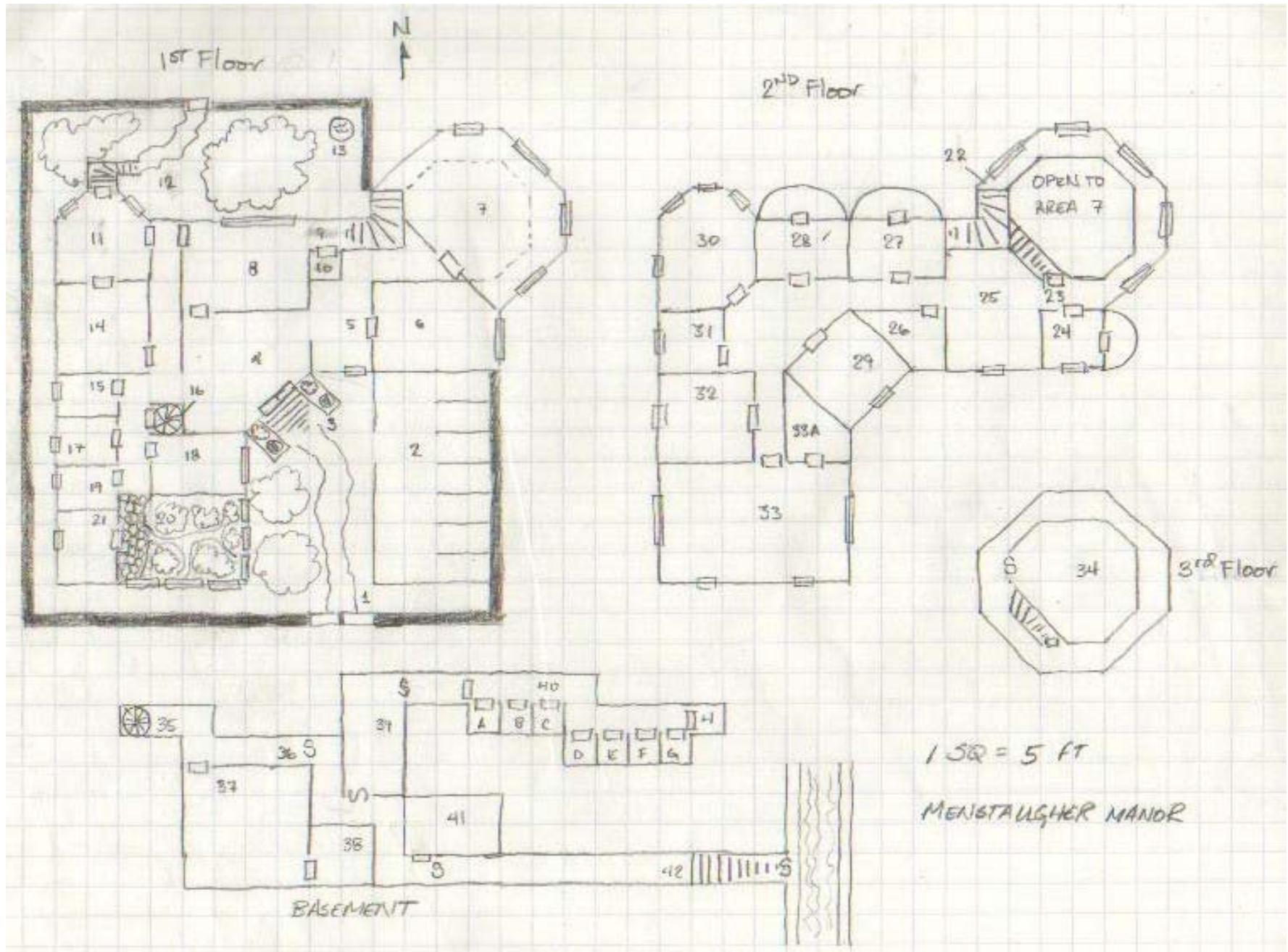
**Telekinetic Blast (Su):** once every 1d4 rounds, the cursed spawn can let its rage and anger manifest itself in the form of a mind blast that spreads out into a 15 ft cone. Anyone caught in the blast must make a Will save DC 15 or suffer 3d4 points of damage. A successful save reduces the damage by half. Evasion ability does not apply. Three times per day, a cursed shadow can use their telekinetic blast to manipulate non-living things and items up to 100 lbs for 2d6 rounds. This allows the cursed shadows to open and close doors, reset traps, etc.

**Create Spawn (Su):** any living creature slain by a cursed shadow will rise as one the next day under the control of the one who slain it.

**Incorporeal Traits:** Any corporeal source that attacks the shadow has a 50% chance of failure. The cursed shadow is not hindered by solid objects and can easily pass through them and when moving silently cannot be heard. Only spells with force effects can automatically succeed in hitting a cursed shadow.

**Undead:** a cursed shadow is undead and is immune to mind-affecting effects, necromantic effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. It is not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

**Skills:** a cursed shadow in total darkness is completely invisible. A cursed shadow in areas that are mostly dark gain a +4 bonus to Hide checks. A cursed shadow in brightly lit areas suffers a -4 penalty to Hide checks.



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