

# A TRIFLING MATTER

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# INTRODUCTION

A Trifling Matter is a seven-act adventure that takes place in the realm of Orrorsh during the latter half of the first year of the war. The events it describes are not linked to or dependent on the outcomes of other adventures, so Game Masters may use this scenario before or after other adventures set in the first year, including other Orrorsh-based adventures. The outcome determines the high-level makeup of the Hellion Court, the Gaunt Man's cabal of elite Nightmares that influence his realm from behind the scenes. It also provides crucial information on the necessary means to destroy Nightmares forever—understanding their darkest secrets, speaking them aloud to the Nightmare, and slaying them with their True Death, all of which require equal parts research and courage in the face of certain doom, or eternal corruption.

By the end of the adventure, the Storm Knights are eyewitnesses to one of the most shocking events in the first year of the Possibility Wars: the collapse of the cosm of Gaea, upon which Core Earth truly becomes the Gaunt Man's home.

## ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

No High Lord can match the Gaunt Man's deviousness, age, or experience. Few other than his closest allies even know how many worlds he has conquered. Starting with Gorhagah, his first victory, the Gaunt Man has traveled to countless unique cosms, colonized their worlds with his own parasitic Gothic horror reality, transformed their populace, slaughtered their heroes, then drained the worlds of every last Possibility.

When finished, he leaves behind the battlefields and the stelae and the hordes of dead, marches his armies of horrors and followers back across the maelstrom bridge, then collapses it to leave the cosm a dead husk. Over the eons its World Laws fade out, and its axioms gradually dwindle like cooling ashes until there is nothing but a cold, lifeless cosm populated by mindless undead.

Some 200 years ago, the Gaunt Man repeated this process on a world called Monde. This cosm resembled our own in many ways, but for one

major difference: On Monde, the French had defeated its fiercest rivals—England, Italy, and Spain—so thoroughly during the Middle Ages that they enjoyed the benefit of being the sole empire to arise in the 16th Century.

The French colonized most of their world in the way England spread colonies globally in our own, until there was not a continent or sea that was not at least partially under their control.

### THE DELAUNAY FAMILY

In Monde's equivalent to North America, the French colony eventually rebelled against their king, establishing a new nation called Aveline. There in 1801, in the bustling port city of Champlainville, a rope merchant named Henri DeLaunay and his young wife, Colette, gave birth to a beautiful daughter they named Sabathina.

She was a happy girl with bouncy, curly black hair. She took joy in acting and singing, just like her mother. By the time she was 10, Sabathina dreamed of becoming a world-famous opera singer, a desire which never truly left her, even in the dark days awaiting her in the future.

Henri and Colette never had another child. He traveled often for work, and his quick temper and cold disposition cast a pall over their home.

By contrast, Colette was a warm, gentle mother. She had a beautiful voice and would regularly sing a gentle, little-known lullaby to Sabathina.

Like other women in Aveline, Colette wasn't much more in society's eyes than a mother, homemaker, and dutiful wife. But she always yearned for more. She started organizing women for local political causes, particularly women's voting rights, which earned her admiration among her peers but disdain from the patriarchal society at large...and growing wrath from her husband.

To preserve his family's "dignity"—and his own reputation among his peers—Henri consulted an apothecary to secretly administer small doses of a sedative in Colette's food. He hoped to merely discourage her from taxing social activity, but as a result Colette suffered from odd memory lapses. Henri used these as an excuse to sequester her in the house for longer periods of time. Eventually the drug caused Colette to develop fits of manic

## CHARACTER DEATH IN ORRORSH

The Delphi Council has their reasons for wanting Alpha clearance agents going on this mission. In short, they have determined that higher-clearance Storm Knights are likely to be less cautious, having cut their teeth on direct conflicts in places like the Nile Empire or Living Land, where threats are usually best dispatched with force and bravery. Heroes with less experience, they figure, are more likely to move unnoticed through Orrorsh, a realm that slaughters the bold and seduces the confident.

This entire adventure is, above all, about investigation. While there are moments of combat, the heroes can expect to spend most of their time exploring locations, gathering information, speaking to NPCs, and deciding how to act on their growing body of knowledge. Characters built for battle and little else might be at a disadvantage—for once!

Also, Orrorsh is a deadly place—its World Laws make it so. It is harder here to Soak damage, many of the enemies gain a bonus to their Toughness in dim lighting, the Destiny and Drama decks lean in favor of the forces of darkness, the realm constantly seeks to corrupt the good-hearted, and Nightmares refresh Possibilities each round until their secrets are revealed. It's quite possible one or more of the Storm Knights could end up dead.

Some players might understandably be nervous to send their characters into such a place. Remind them the only way to defeat the Gaunt Man is to venture here to learn his secrets. They should succeed if they remain cautious, stick together, and focus on smart card play and teamwork. After all, anyone who has faced a T-Rex, Ayslish dragon, or Tharkoldu knows Orrorsh isn't the *only* dangerous realm!

If they are still reticent, allow them to make or choose new Alpha clearance characters and leave their more seasoned characters at home.

## SENSITIVE TOPICS

The nature of horror means it often deals with and exposes difficult topics. This adventure contains scenes and themes that include child abuse, body horror, captivity, mental illness, suicide, depravity, cold-blooded murder, disease, and so on, which might be upsetting or distressing to some players. Also those with a phobia of spiders might have an especially difficult time with some of the encounters in this adventure.

A successful *Torg Eternity* session set in Orrorsh (or in any game, for that matter) relies on communication between the game master and players. The well-being of the players should take precedence over the story, plot, or attempts at “accuracy.”

We recommend starting with a “Session Zero” to clearly establish play styles, goals, expectations, and boundaries. Techniques such as “Lines and Veils” or the “X-Card” (created by John Stavropoulos) allow players and game masters to set personal boundaries and communicate their comfort levels in a socially safe manner. We also recommend ending with an after-session check-in to make sure all players feel okay to continue or need to revisit the group’s boundaries, especially after sessions which include particularly troubling scenes.

The *Torg Eternity Session Zero* document, available for free at the *Ulisses Spiele* website, contains helpful guides for establishing safe play for all involved, with tips and suggestions for navigating potentially upsetting themes from every realm in *Torg Eternity*.

The key is to make sure everyone at the table feels safe, supported, and comfortable during every session. If a player expresses discomfort, they should be under no pressure to explain or justify their feelings.

confusion, leading Henri to confine her to the attic permanently “for her own good.”

After a year of this isolation, Sabathina’s mother finally committed suicide by throwing herself from the window. Sabathina was 14 years old.

## THE ASYLUM

Over the next couple of years, Sabathina became strong-willed and rebellious, following in the footsteps of her mother and the values she held dear. Her father would have none of it and arranged to have her committed, under similar claims as those of his deceased wife: that she suffering from “hysteria.”

Unspeakable torments awaited her at the hands of Dr. Melgrath, the director of the *Sanatorium Nouvelles Bénédiction*s. His experimental treatments increasingly bordered on torture. For three years Sabathina suffered under his “care.”

During this time, Monde became the Gaunt Man’s new target.

Monde’s axioms were similar enough to those the Gaunt Man brought with him that the changes were subtle, at first. Dr. Melgrath became worse, if that were possible, and despair washed over all of Aveline as rumors spread of unkillable night creatures, the dead rising, and other horrors.

Corruption grew in Sabathina’s heart, borne from her lifetime of ill treatment and magnified by the World Laws of this new reality. From her room in the isolation ward, she gradually discovered she had a strange control over the many spiders dwelling there. One night she summoned thousands of them and used this tiny army to escape.

## A NIGHTMARE IS BORN

Sabathina spent a few months getting by in the big city, working various schemes to improve her situation, but never once contemplating going home. She wanted her father to believe she was dead. Before long, she caught the attentions of a young accountant, Lucas Bouchard, and they were soon married.

But happiness would again elude Sabathina. While riding through the forest on their way home from their wedding, a vampire attacked their carriage. The vampire seized Lucas and drained him of blood

while Sabathina lay trapped beneath the toppled carriage, gradually being crushed. In desperation, she once more called on her long-dormant ability to summon spiders. A carpet of them flooded out of the trees to devour the screaming vampire.

However, now her boon became a curse, for her indelible link to the spiders she controlled caused her to become a vampire herself.

For the next ten years she grew in power until she was the most powerful of her kind on Monde. Her unique affinity to spiders instead of bats caught the attention of the Gaunt Man, who arranged to help her gain more power. When Monde finally fell to the darkness fifteen years later, Sabathina had risen to become one of the Gaunt Man's most powerful Nightmares.

She had one last request of the Gaunt Man: spare her father. By this point Henri had lost his fortune and was reduced to grave robbing. Sabathina spun him in her preserving threads and for all the long centuries since, has kept him artificially alive, moving him from cosm to cosm as she traveled with the Gaunt Man as part of his Hellion Court. This act, and her relentless torture of his undying body over the centuries, is what finally made what little was left of "Sabathina" fall away.

She forgot her original name and became "Basjas," a word from one of the Gaunt Man's conquered worlds.

It's meaning? "She of the Undying Thirst".

## ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

A Trifling Matter opens with the heroes being summoned to a meeting with Quinn Sebastian for a special mission: learn how to kill a Nightmare, "undying" members of the Gaunt Man's legion. The target is "The Red Lady," a bloody specter hunting the foggy streets of Mumbai.

Only one man is known to have killed a Nightmare, a Gaeian named Nathaniel Morris. The first step on their mission is to find Nathaniel in Kolkata and learn his secret. There they discover Nathaniel was consumed by the act of destroying the Black Dog, a Nightmare which plagued Gaea. He has become a dark spirit. The only way to destroy him is to piece together his own dark secrets. Working

with his own daughter, the team seeks out clues to Nathaniel's dark past and destroy him, thus learning the method they'll have to employ to bring a permanent end to the Red Lady.

Traveling to Mumbai, the team gathers clues as to the identity of the Red Lady, learning more about the full scope of her reign of terror. At last they determine she is actually a vampire who by night acts in a "Grand Guignol" theater in the city under the name Lady Basjas. They gather clues which point to places around India where they may learn more about her—crucial information they'll need to succeed in their deadly mission.

They may approach all but the final act in any order they wish. Following their trail of clues, they journey to an asylum currently run by the nefarious doctor who once tormented Basjas when she was a girl. They also invade Basjas' manor home high up in the mountains, contending with zombies, phantoms, and her spawn in the process. In another act, they seek out one of Lady Basjas' former suitors in his home deep in the Ganges delta, dealing along the way with a cursed spirit which traps them in the flooded village. And in yet another act they must undertake a perilous mission up the slopes of Mount Everest to a Ravagon-guarded repository of Gaeian lore in search of a link to Basjas' past.

The adventure culminates in the heroes infiltrating a masquerade ball hosted by the Gaunt Man himself to learn Basjas' "True Death," followed by a tense pursuit through the night streets of Mumbai to finally catch and slay the vampiress for good. During this exciting conclusion they also witness the collapse of Gaea and the next terrifying chapter in the Gaunt Man's plans for Core Earth!

## ACT TIMING

Act One takes the characters to Kolkata in search of Nathaniel Morris and the knowledge he took to the grave. In Act Two they investigate leads in Mumbai to learn the identity of the Red Lady. Acts Three, Four, Five, and Six may be played in any order the players wish, based on location clues they discovered in Act Two. Then they return to Mumbai in the Act Seven finale to confront Basjas and permanently destroy her.

## THE NIGHTMARES

During their mission, the Storm Knights must contend with two main Nightmares—one they are pursuing, and one pursuing *them*!

### LADY BASJAS

As a member of the Hellion Court, Lady Basjas (pronounced *ba-ZHA*; rhymes with *Rajah*) is the most powerful Nightmare from Monde, one of the Gaunt Man's drained worlds in which France was the greatest colonial power instead of England.

She was born 200 years ago as Sabathina DeLaunay. Her father imprisoned her mother in the attic on false pretenses, leading her mother to kill herself. When Sabathina became a rebellious teen, her father had her committed in an asylum run by the demented Dr. Melgrath. There, she learned how to control spiders and used that ability to escape.

By that point her world had been invaded by the Gaunt Man and his horrors. Sabathina got married, but when her husband was slain by a vampire, she summoned spiders to slay the fiend, thereby becoming a vampire herself.

Sabathina took the name "Basjas" and went on to become a powerful Nightmare, traveling with the Gaunt Man on his rapacious invasions across many cosms as a member of his elite Hellion Court.

As a vampire, Basjas has most of the classical weaknesses of her kind: allergy to sunlight, aversion to garlic, and loathing of holy symbols. But her vampiric affinity is to spiders, rather than bats. Her "purest" form is that of a huge spider, but her vanity causes her to strongly favor her human appearance. Just as vampires may turn into mist, Basjas may turn into a swarm of spiders. In this form she is much weaker—use the **Poison Spider Swarm** profile on page 105, but retain her Possibilities. She scatters to reform later if Defeated.

Most of the time, Basjas appears as a beautiful woman in her 30s. She has dark curly hair, fair skin, a heart-shaped face, and captivating eyes. She prefers high fashion of the style common in Orrorsh—fancy dresses, large hats, and parasols—with spider- or web-like embellishments. Around her neck is a fine chain bearing a ruby, a wedding gift from her long-dead husband.

Basjas' mission for the Gaunt man is to do nothing more than she would do naturally: inspire just enough hope with her beautiful performances to bring the horrors of Orrorsh into focus, and then subvert that hope by using her "other talents" to spread all-consuming fear, corruption, and death.

Her personal goals are less clear-cut. She barely remembers the details of her past, but she suspects there was never anything wrong with her mother aside from being strong-willed in an age where that was not acceptable for women. She's



BASJAS

positive all her mother's other mental maladies were to do with the horrific treatment by Basjas' father.

As a major Nightmare, Basjas is a very powerful and complex being who transcends the normal bounds of reality. She was not born this way. She was made through a series of horrific events, the loss of key memories and people who grounded her, and the festering corruption brought on by the Gaunt Man and his conquest of her world.

She has several secrets, all of which need to be discovered and communicated to Basjas herself to bring about her True Death.

**Origin:** Uncover Basjas' original identity, Sabathina DeLaunay, and speak her name to her.

**Habit:** Discover Basjas's favorite way to feed is to target male audience members who attend one of her shows at the Oubliette Theater and behave in a way that shows disrespect toward her performance.

**Desire:** Discover Basjas yearns above all to be adored, a desire which is linked to her love of acting, her lost years without human contact during her institutionalization, the loss of her mother, and her emotionally detached father.

**Link:** Locate the lullaby once sung to Basjas by her mother and sing it to her.

**Token:** Find Basjas' father still alive—preserved in an undead state through centuries of torture by his daughter—and slay him.

**True Death:** The only way to permanently kill Basjas is to bind her in the way she binds her prey, then destroy her body with the cleansing nature of fire. She must be enshrouded in twine or rope that has been blessed, then her body must be burned to ash. Unlike other vampires, a stake through the heart or exposure to sunlight only temporarily destroys her body, and she is formed once more a few days later.

## BASJAS (HUMAN FORM)

**Attributes:** Charisma 16, Dexterity 15, Mind 12, Spirit 15, Strength 14

**Skills:** Beast Riding 16, dodge 18, evidence analysis 14, find 16, intimidation 18, language (French) 16, maneuver 17, persuasion 20, profession: actor 19, reality 18, scholar 15, science 13, stealth 17,

streetwise 19, survival 13, taunt 18, telepathy 16, tracking 15, trick 16, unarmed combat 18, willpower 20.

**Move:** 15, **Tough** 14, **Shock** 15, **Wounds** 4.

**Equipment:** Fine clothing, parasol, ruby necklace.

**Perks:** Bolster, Hard to Kill, Psionic (cloud mind, confusion, mind control), Vampire,

**Possibilities:** 5 (5 Refresh)

**Special Abilities:**

- **Allergies:** Sunlight causes 10+1BD damage each round.

- **Bite:** Damage Strength +2 (16) against a Grappled foe. Automatically hits the lowest Armor value. Shock and Wounds dealt by a bite are recovered by the vampire.

- **Blood Sense:** Tracking against a target becomes Favored once a Vampire deals a Wound.

- **Claws:** Damage Strength +2 (16).

- **Change Form:** Basjas can change at will to one of her several different forms. The process takes a full round to complete, during which she can take no actions other than to defend. The exception is her spider swarm form which she can assume instantly on her action.

- **Cloak of Darkness:** Basjas gains a bonus to Toughness equal to the current Darkness penalty.

- **Dread:** Any Standard Scene with Basjas becomes a Dramatic Scene instead.

- **Enthrall:** Basjas may enthrall a single foe who can see her with a contest of willpower or Mind. She has a -4 penalty if the target is in a hostile state. If she fails, she cannot enthrall that target for the rest of the scene. She may direct his actions until the end of the target's next turn on a Standard Success, for one minute on a Good success, or until the end of the current scene on an Outstanding Success. Commands which drastically oppose the target's nature, such as harming himself or an ally, force another contest of willpower or Mind.

- **Fear:** Upon first seeing Basjas as a vampire, a hero must test willpower or Spirit or become Very Stymied.

- **Minions:** Basjas may roll reality to divert any hit to a nearby Vampire or mortal minion.

- **Labyrinth of Lies:** Basjas' secrets can only be discovered through research. Spells, miracles, and the like simply fail. Cards used to discover

her secrets are lost, but the entire team receives a Possibility.

- **Undead:** Basjas is immune to poison and other effects that require breathing, eating, or other “living” processes.

- **Wallwalker:** Vampires can cling to walls and ceilings and move at their normal rate along such surfaces.

## BASJAS (GIANT SPIDER FORM)

In this form, Basjas appears as a massive spider. She retains all the Special Abilities of her regular form but gains additional Shock, armor, and her spinnerets.

**Attributes:** Charisma 16, Dexterity 15, Mind 12, Spirit 15, Strength 14

**Skills:** Beast Riding 16, dodge 18, evidence analysis 14, find 16, intimidation 18, language (French) 16, maneuver 17, persuasion 20, profession: actor 19, reality 18, scholar 15, science 13, stealth 17, streetwise 19, survival 13, taunt 18, telepathy 16, tracking 15, trick 16, unarmed combat 18, willpower 20.

**Move:** 17, **Tough** 17 (3), **Shock** 17, **Wounds** 4.

**Equipment:** —

**Perks:** Bolster, Hard to Kill, Psionic (*cloud mind, confusion, mind control*), Vampire,

**Possibilities:** 5 (Nightmare)

**Special Abilities:**

- **Allergies:** Sunlight causes 10+1BD damage each round.

- **Armor:** Thick chitin +3.

- **Bite:** Strength +3 (16).

- **Blood Sense:** Tracking against a target becomes Favored once a Vampire deals a Wound.

- **Claws:** Damage Strength +2 (16).

- **Change Form:** Basjas can change at will to one of her several different forms. The process takes a full round to complete, during which she can take no actions other than to defend. The exception is her spider swarm form which she can assume instantly on her action.

- **Cloak of Darkness:** Basjas gains a bonus to Toughness equal to the current Darkness penalty.

- **Dread:** Any Standard scene with Basjas becomes a Dramatic Scene instead.

- **Enthrall:** Basjas may enthrall a single foe who

can see her with a contest of *willpower* or *Mind*. She has a -4 penalty if the target is in a hostile state. If she fails, she cannot enthrall that target for the rest of the scene. She may direct his actions until the end of the target's next turn on a Standard Success, for one minute on a Good Success, or until the end of the current scene on an Outstanding Success. Commands which drastically oppose the target's nature, such as harming himself or an ally, force another contest of *willpower* or *Mind*.

- **Fear:** Upon first seeing Basjas as a vampire, a hero must test *willpower* or *Spirit* or become Very Stymied.

- **Large:** In this form Basjas is the size of a rhinoceros. Attacks against her gain a +4 bonus.

- **Minions:** Basjas may roll reality to divert any hit to a nearby Vampire or mortal minion.

- **Spinnerets:** Basjas can bind foes in thick silk when she Grapples them. Restrained foes are immobilized until cut free or they wriggle out—Toughness 18 or a Heroic (DN 18) Dexterity test.

- **Undead:** Basjas is immune to poison and other effects that require breathing, eating, or other “living” processes.

- **Wallwalker:** Vampires can cling to walls and ceilings and move at their normal rate along such surfaces.

## THE LUDOGHAST

One of the Gaunt Man's most mysterious Nightmares is the Ludoghost, a bizarre spirit of regret and despair. It seeks out those who pry too deeply into the nature of Orrorsh's reality, never directly targeting its foes but instead leaving a trail of innocent victims in their wake in hopes they give up in horror.

In this adventure, the Ludoghost is automatically set on the Storm Knights' trail from the beginning. However its identity and purpose remain a mystery until later in the adventure.

The Ludoghost was once Vahid Pasdar, a generous Storm Knight in one of the many worlds the Gaunt Man invaded. Discovering almost by accident that Nightmares are always born of a troubled history, Vahid made the connection between a Nightmare's darkest secrets and its True Death. He employed