

# CARNIVAL OF LOST SOULS

## DEMENTLIEU: DANCE WITH THE DEVIL

By SVIATOSLAV DEMCHENKO

Survive the intrigues of Dementlieu in this adventure  
for the world's greatest role-playing game!



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# INTRODUCTION

Dance with the Devil is a 5 to 8 hours adventure, balanced for a group of 5 players of 6th-7th level.

Dance with the Devil is a part of the **Carnival of Lost Souls** campaign and is a second adventure in the series. It can be played both as a standalone adventure and as a part of the campaign. Refer to **Appendix C - Carnival of Lost Souls** to learn more on how to fit this adventure into a broader campaign.

## ADVENTURE HOOKS

The basic hook assumes that players are helping Lady Isolde, leader of the domains-traveling Carnival. She is hunting the Caller – a mysterious entity from the Mists, that destroyed the lives of her friends and loved ones. In order to track him down, she found a group of people, whose lives were ruined by the Caller. Isolde hopes that by helping them and setting their lives back on track, she will be able to mess with Caller's plans to lure him into direct confrontation.

Characters are helping Lady Isolde in order to get her to lead them out of the Mists, or to some specific domain they want to get to.

This hook, tying characters to the Carnival, is important, because it introduces a strict time frame. Characters have only 7 days, and one try at the Grand Masquerade to help Count Lupin. After that the Carnival, due to its nature, has to move, and it will be a while before they can come back.

If you implement another hook, make sure to think about what stops the players from having infinite tries at some of the activities. Time pressure is important here. For example, after losing once at the Games, any participant is banned from participation. Some of the activities are dangerous and deadly challenges that are hard to repeat twice, etc.

Dance with the Devil is heavily based on Van Richten's Guide to Ravenloft, which is a must-read book for running this adventure. However, if you are an experienced GM, it shouldn't be a problem to adapt everything you find in here for your own game world.

## BACKGROUND

Once upon a time, **Norbert Bordeaux (now known as Count Lupin)** met a man down on his luck, who called himself **Jasper**. He was poor and had no understanding of how Dementieu society worked, but had an amazing talent for craftsmanship. Norbert took Jasper in and in return, he crafted wondrous items for the trader. Pretty soon the Bordeaux family became well known in Port-A-Lucine, thanks to figurines, jewelry, pottery and clothes made by Jasper and sold or gifted by Norbert.

But that wasn't enough. Before Jasper, the family of Bordeaux was widely known as middle-class citizens. And with newfound fame, they only solidified their status instead of elevating it. They were still just traders, not proper nobles. Few occasional invitations to the Grand Masquerade were all that Norbert got, and that wasn't enough - soon the novelty of his work worn out, and even those few invitations stopped coming. He worked more and more with Jasper, trying to devise a plan on how to achieve the coveted nobility. With time, he became alienated from his family and spent more time in a workshop with Jasper or at balls and receptions with "nobles" than at home, with his loved ones.

One day Jasper approached him with shaking hands and excitement in his eyes. He found something that could change their fortunes forever!

While out looking for materials for his new creation, he found a woman by the name of **Dolores who claimed to be a step-sister of the Duchess herself!** And apparently... The Duchess was a fraud!

Norbert met the woman (Dolores) and together with Jasper, they devised a plan to corner the Duchess, blackmail, and control her. For that, Norbert needed two things - access to the Masquerade and a persuasive image of a man from greater nobility. Norbert reached out to the "fairy grandmothers" from **Three Old Gables** and struck a deal to get into the next Masquerade, posing as a noble. The terms were simple: **"You will become Count Lupin, a man of noble blood and a master puppeteer. But, until you make the Duchess dance to your tune, your family will be the only ones to play your games"**. Norbert didn't think twice of the strange condition, and accepted without hesitation.

That night he entered the Masquerade. He kept close to the Duchess, waiting for Jasper and Dolores to make a grand entry, so he could expose her... But no one came. Ball ended, and Norbert came back to his home to find it empty – there were no signs of Jasper and his creations, no sign of Dolores, and, seemingly, no sign of his family. That is, until he saw a collection of puppets in the Jaspers room – all matching looks and sizes of his actual family.

Norbert, now Count Lupin, found that he could direct his will to make puppets walk, talk, and dance. But the second his concentration slipped, they all became just inanimate wooden toys. Desperate, he joined the Carnival of Isolde, hoping to find Jasper or Dolores and reclaim his family.

## OVERVIEW

This adventure is basically an open-ended sandbox. Players have a clear goal - break the curse, laid on the Count by fairy godmothers from three old gables. However, there are a lot of different ways they can go about it.

This book describes events, locations and NPC's which are important to the story. In the next paragraph, you will also find the most common ways how characters can achieve their goals. However, feel free to tweak and change things if players go out of their way or invent some crazy new solution to the problem that everyone at the table (including you), find plausible and fun.

To help Count Lupin, adventurers have several options:

- **Expose the Duchess.** For that, they can find Dolores who was indeed a step-sister of the Duchess, but lives under a pretense name in the Port-a-Lucine. She saw the terrible power her step-sister possesses and was afraid to move against her on her own. This route will require visiting a Red Widow theater, where Dolores is acting in the cabaret, and untangling the mystery behind the cult of the Great Spider. This option is not as obvious as the other ones. If players get curious about the fate of Dolores, Count Lupin can remember that she was mentioning Red Widow theater once or twice in conversation. Additionally, as the group travels around the city, Count can notice a poster for a new performance in the Theater, featuring a girl wearing the same mask Dolores wore to their meetings - red velvet mask with silver spider-net lines, hawk-like nose cover, and small greenstone between the eye slits.
- **Make another deal with Hags.** They will claim that killing them won't save Norbert (and that's true), but are willing to make another bargain. Soon, the Games will be held. Current reigning champions made a deal with Hags to become champions, but managed to cheat their way out of paying the debt. Hags will ask adventurers to participate and win the Games, so that they can exact their toll.

- **Find the loophole in the Curse.** Curse specifically says “make the Duchess dance to your tune”. While it means a proverbial “follow your command”, “do as you will say”, it can also mean literal “dance to the tune that Count will play”. There are different ways to go about it, but most obvious are two:
  - **Winning in the Games** - then, a favour of the Duchess can be asked. Like, “dance to me”, and Count can play something in the background.
  - **Getting Count to play in the troupe for the Masquerade** - this can be achieved by participating in an open contest, held each time before the Masquerade. Afterward, someone has to take the Duchess for dance through courtship during the Masquerade itself.





# PART I

## In the City of Dementliue



### ENTERING THE CITY

Lady Isolda leads the Carnival straight into the City. It's not her first time in the Dementliue, and guards recognize her immediately and let her through the gate. The Carnival is given permission to set tents in a square in the Western part of the city, right beneath the Palace of Enlightenment.

As Carnival goes through the streets, read to them the following:

*As you enter the city, you are met with a vision of splendor and liveliness. Carefully paved roads lead deep into the city, surrounded by neat two- three- story houses. Every house has a well maintained facade, that looks like it was painted just yesterday. Numerous decoration elements are obviously competing with one another, as each dwelling tries to outmatch another in its presentation. People slowly walk the streets, dressed in exquisite gowns, as if they all are making their way to a fancy dinner party. A smell of delicious spices fills your nostrils, seemingly from kitchens preparing their meals. A steady, comfortable temperature wraps the whole atmosphere around you in a cosy blanket of comfort.*

If players choose to pay closer attention, or if any character has passive perception or investigation 15 or higher, they can notice several inconsistencies in the overall vision of splendor:

- People in fancy gowns, sneakily going through the garbage bins in search of food or decoration elements to use. If they see they are noticed, they will quickly pretend to have lost something and then go away on their own business.
- If you look past the intentionally dazzling look of most of the decorations, you can notice they are actually made from very low-quality, second-hand material, that were just cleverly re-used. However, they probably won't last long and require constant attention to maintain.
- Beyond the coat of spices, one (especially having proficiency in cooking utensils) can smell something burning.
- People usually walk slowly while traversing main roads, where there are many passersby. However, they quickly break into quicker pace once they turn into more secluded, side-alleys.

Once the Carnival settles, Isolda gathers adventurers together with the Count and he tells his story (if he hasn't already). Additionally, Isolda explains to players that the Masquerade is going to happen in 7 days, and right after that (the next day) the Carnival will have to move. This sets a timeframe for adventurers - they have a week in this place to get things done.



Afterwards, players can discuss their course of actions, with Isolda and Count suggesting things or explaining how the city works:

- To receive an invitation to Grand Masquerade, adventurers will need to make an impression of nobility and wear expensive clothes.
- Everyone here pretends to be something they are not.
- Talent Contest is an easy way into the Grand Masquerade if you can perform.
- The Games are going to be held this time, might be also a good way to get into the Grand Masquerade if they want to.
- Three old Gables serve as Fairy Godmothers to local people, but their help always has a price. Isolda is fairly certain that they are hags.
- The Count has a house in the city (a 2-floor building with 5 rooms) which players can optionally use as a base of operations (it can be in a building of your choosing near the Great Library).

Isolda can provide for the players 500 gold beforehand and 1 uncommon or common magical item or consumable. Use your judgment as a DM whether your group needs this or not. Otherwise, she can promise 1 rare magical item for completing the mission, and 200 gold to each adventurer.

## THREE OLD GABLES

A coven of green hags resides here, making deals of all sorts with desperate people, who covet higher social standing in a society of Dementliue. They call themselves Fairy Grandmothers.

On the outside, the place seems cozy and inviting.

Hags pose as three elderly wizards, their huts are a bit crooked (hence the name), but look tidy and inviting. They have all manner of magical talking beasts as helpers - cats, dogs, rats, crows, owls, the list goes on. There is always warm tea and fresh pastries for visitors and clients.

But this facade is yet another of Dementliue's great illusions. Hags of Three old Gables are old, cunning, and rejoice in twisting the contracts in a way, to bring great suffering. A lot of people went to them for help, but none found what they really needed. Many end up as talking beasts, in the coven's servitude.

## PERSONALITIES

### GRANNY WEAVER

oldest of the coven, she can often be found silently weaving on the porch of her house. She has few words to share and mostly observes the contract-making and negotiations from aside. That look is deceptive - as no contract is ever sealed without her final blessing. An insightful individual (passive is 17 or higher) can notice that other grannies often follow barely noticeable signs of confirmation or rejection from Granny Weaver.

Her favorite guise is that of the old, frail lady with silver, long hair, woven into many braids.

Weaver will interact with adventurers directly as a group leader only if one of two happens:

- She noticed that one or more adventurers have a mark of great destiny (up to gm to determine).
- Adventurers proved to be skillful negotiators or a big threat.

Weaver hates direct violence, and prefers to stay safe (after all, she has all the time in the world) but will do everything to protect coven's little business here in Dementliue.

### GRANNY PROMISE

Almost as old as Granny Weaver, Granny Promise is the silver tongue of the group. She is the main spokesperson during negotiations. Granny Promise is a bit resentful towards Weaver (for ancient deeds) and thinks she would have been a better coven leader. However, her survival instinct and her love of their current business are stronger than her beef with Weaver.

Her favorite guise is of an old woman, that is still showing signs of former strength - tall, almost standing straight, with short-cut silver hair, simple clothes, a direct smile, and broad hands.

### GRANNY SAND

The youngest of the group, Granny Sand is the most impulsive and quick to anger. She will instantly hate cocky characters and will be prone to use violence against the threat of violence, if not kept in check by Granny Weaver.

When people come, it's Granny Sand that treats them with homemade pastries, and warm tea and distracts them in all possible ways from thinking too much about suspicious contract terms.

Granny Sand always adopts the guise of the rotund, small, cheerful old lady (that still has some dark hair hidden in silver).

## WHEN ADVENTURERS COME

Hags will tread carefully with them, instantly recognizing the danger that any adventuring party poses. They will play coy, dodging direct accusations and tiptoeing around the subject of the hag's business. They can admit to their nature if they sense danger or an opportunity to gain trust or to gain control of the conversation.

Otherwise, hags pose as wise old wizards, that gained powers through contact with their fey ancestors. They claim to be trying to help people, but the powers they got are as fickle and tricky as fey themselves. They call themselves "fairy grandmothers" in a bit cheeky, joking manner.

They can relieve the Count of his contract, but only if something is given in return. They can accept the trade from other characters if they are convincing enough (20-25 persuasion check) AND if the thing proposed is valuable enough - like one of the class features, or voice from an often singing bard, or a holy relic from the cleric, etc.

However, there is one specific favor that the coven would like from the adventurers - winning in The Games.

Some years ago, a group of local teenagers bargained with hags to receive great athletic prowess to become the champions of The Games. Hags agreed, but twisted the deal - instead of making each one a versatile athlete, they divided boons and expertise between the group, so that each was good at his specific part of The Game. In addition, the group would serve 100 years as hag's servants, once they lose at least once. Each win would remove 10 years from the contract.

Hags knew well that these kids were a very chaotic, unorganized group, unable to follow any command and work together as a group. To their surprise, they did. "Amazing Athletes" (how teenagers ended up calling themselves) won game after game until only 10 years of servitude were left.

Hags hate when their people manage to wiggle out of paying for magical help. They are ready to let the Count out of his delicious suffering if Adventurers will enter the game and finally beat the "Amazing Athletes" at The Games.

Coven will not share the details of the contract, however with good persuasion rolls (aim at around 15-20, lower if arguments are very good) players might be able to learn specifics. Alternatively, the Athletes themselves can also tell about it if put under pressure.

## DEVELOPMENT

- **If the personal deal is struck for Count's freedom** - Hags will take the price and then return Count and his family to their original forms.
- **If the deal for Athletes defeat is struck** - Hags will return Count and his family to their original forms the second Athletes are defeated - or wait a bit to do that in an opportune moment, to cause a bit of chaos for the adventurers.
- **If attacked**, Hags will try to defend their home using the beasts to help them. However, when at least one hag is downed or close to death, all will flee to Feywild.

Generally, the contract cannot be broken with the deaths of the hags. However, if you, as a GM, feel that it's great enough of a feat to allow this - feel free to change this ruling.

Coven houses contain only a modest treasure, for most are hidden in their domain in the Feywild (Yes, these hags can enter and exit Domains of their own free will - because they never wish to escape Dementliue, they have too much precious, tasty misery in here. These "fairy godmothers" are part of Dark Powers' schemes and thus have freedom of movement until such time that they become... useless). Roll once on the Treasure Horde table (DMG, p133) for CR 5-10. The only note would be that money is mostly held by the hag's not in coins, but in expensive pottery, high-value cooking utensils, rare cooking ingredients, and expensive silken pillows.

### COVEN SPELLCASTING AND TACTICS

**Fairy Grandmothers have following coven spells:**

1st level (4 slots): bane, bless

2nd level (3 slots): augury, detect thoughts, locate object

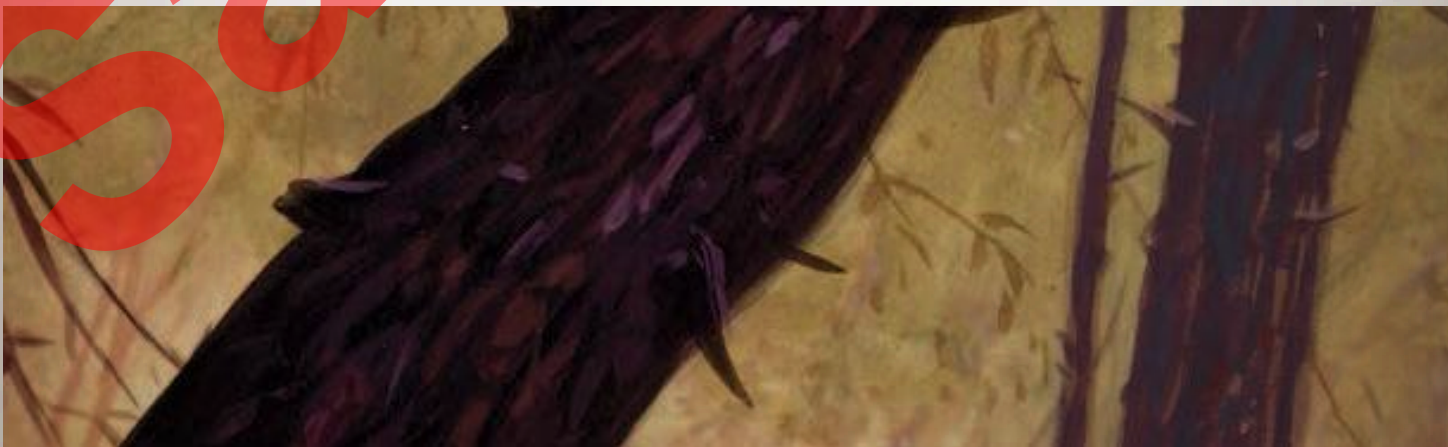
3rd level (3 slots): clairvoyance, dispel magic, nondetection, counterspell

4th level (3 slots): arcane eye, locate creature

5th level (2 slots): geas, legend lore

6th level (1 slot): true seeing

**In combat**, hags rely on the biggest creatures in their service to defend them. They have two dire wolves, two brown bears and two giant boars. Hags also pre-cast true seeing (on Weaver) and nondetection (on all of them). They **Bane** all adventurers and **Bless** all creatures at their service with higher-level spell slots.





# GREEN HAG

Medium fey, neutral evil

**Armor Class** 17 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 82 (11d8 + 33)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)

**Skills** Arcana +3, Deception +4, Perception +4, Stealth +3

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

**Languages** Common, Draconic, Sylvan

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Amphibious.** The hag can breathe air and water.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The hag's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 12). She can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *dancing lights*, *minor illusion*, *vicious mockery*

**Mimicry.** The hag can mimic animal sounds and humanoid voices. A creature that hears the sounds can tell they are imitations with a successful DC 14 Wisdom (Insight) check.

**Hag Coven.** When hags must work together, they form covens, in spite of their selfish natures. A coven is made up of hags of any type, all of whom are equals within the group. However, each of the hags continues to desire more personal power.

A coven consists of three hags so that any arguments between two hags can be settled by the third. If more than three hags ever come together, as might happen if two covens come into conflict, the result is usually chaos.

**Shared Spellcasting (Coven Only).** While all three members of a hag coven are within 30 feet of one another, they can each cast the following spells from the wizard's spell list but must share the spell slots among themselves:

1st level (4 slots): *identify*, *ray of sickness*

2nd level (3 slots): *hold person*, *locate object*

3rd level (3 slots): *bestow curse*, *counterspell*, *lightning bolt*

4th level (3 slots): *phantasmal killer*, *polymorph*

5th level (2 slots): *contact other plane*, *scrying*

6th level (1 slot): *eye bite*

For casting these spells, each hag is a 12th-level spellcaster that uses Intelligence as her spellcasting ability. The spell save DC is 12+the hag's Intelligence modifier, and the spell attack bonus is 4+the hag's Intelligence modifier.

**Hag Eye (Coven Only).** A hag coven can craft a magic item called a hag eye, which is made from a real eye coated in varnish and often fitted to a pendant or other wearable item. The hag eye is usually entrusted to a minion for safekeeping and transport. A hag in the coven can take an action to see what the hag eye sees if the hag eye is on the same plane of existence. A hag eye has AC 10, 1 hit point, and darkvision with a radius of 60 feet. If it is destroyed, each coven member takes 3d10 psychic damage and is blinded for 24 hours.

A hag coven can have only one hag eye at a time, and creating a new one requires all three members of the coven to perform a ritual. The ritual takes 1 hour, and the hags can't perform it while blinded. During the ritual, if the hags take any action other than performing the ritual, they must start over.

## Actions

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 13 (2d8 + 4) slashing damage.

**Illusory Appearance.** The hag covers herself and anything she is wearing or carrying with a magical illusion that makes her look like another creature of her general size and humanoid shape. The illusion ends if the hag takes a bonus action to end it or if she dies.

The changes wrought by this effect fail to hold up to physical inspection. For example, the hag could appear to have smooth skin, but someone touching her would feel her rough flesh. Otherwise, a creature must take an action to visually inspect the illusion and succeed on a DC 20 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discern that the hag is disguised.

**Invisible Passage.** The hag magically turns invisible until she attacks or casts a spell, or until her concentration ends (as if concentrating on a spell). While invisible, she leaves no physical evidence of her passage, so she can be tracked only by magic. Any equipment she wears or carries is invisible with her.



## DIRE WOLF

Large beast, unaligned

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 37 (5d10 + 10)

**Speed** 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	15 (+2)	15 (+2)	3 (-4)	12 (+1)	7 (-2)

**Skills** Perception +3, Stealth +4

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Keen Hearing and Smell.** The wolf has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on hearing or smell.

**Pack Tactics.** The wolf has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the wolf's allies is within 5 ft. of the creature and the ally isn't incapacitated.

### Actions

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

## BROWN BEAR

Large beast, unaligned

**Armor Class** 11 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 34 (4d10 + 12)

**Speed** 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
19 (+4)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	2 (-4)	13 (+1)	7 (-2)

**Skills** Perception +3

**Senses** passive Perception 13

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Keen Smell.** The bear has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

### Actions

**Multiattack.** The bear makes two attacks: one with its bite and one with its claws.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 11 (2d6 + 4) slashing damage.

## GIANT BOAR

Large beast, unaligned

**Armor Class** 12 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 42 (5d10 + 15)

**Speed** 40 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	10 (+0)	16 (+3)	2 (-4)	7 (-2)	5 (-3)

**Senses** passive Perception 8

**Languages** —

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Charge.** If the boar moves at least 20 ft. straight toward a target and then hits it with a tusk attack on the same turn, the target takes an extra 7 (2d6) slashing damage. If the target is a creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

**Relentless (Recharges after a Short or Long Rest).** If the boar takes 10 damage or less that would reduce it to 0 hit points, it is reduced to 1 hit point instead.

### Actions

**Tusk.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage.

## THE GAME

Once in a while, Duchess holds a **special game of Polo at her Estate**, during the **Grand Masquerade**. The prize for winning is a favor from Duchess herself - anything from monetary reward to titles and privileges.

Polo was very popular among citizens of Dementliue, as virtually anyone could participate. And winning the Game usually meant climbing a ladder of Dementliue society not as a pretender, but as someone actually entitled to status.

However, in recent years one group - **Amazing Athletes** entered the scene, winning game after game, and the stream of new pretenders dwindled to a halt. Duchess herself grew quite bored of predictability, and so the Game is not hosted as often as it used to.

Lady Isolde chose a moment to visit the domain with her Carnival specifically to catch the Games. She is unaware of its importance to Hags, but she is aware that favor from Domain Lord is a strong opportunity.

### SIGNING UP FOR PARTICIPATION.

Up until the day of The Grand Masquerade, anyone can sign up for the Games. The clerk in the Lord Governor's Manor handles all inquiries, and training for the Games is usually held in front of the Manor.

When Adventurers arrive, the Clerk (Germaine de Poirot) would boost up the Games as much as possible, promising a once-in-a-lifetime experience, grand prize, amazing tournament, and decent opponents. The truth is - there is no competition for the Amazing Athletes. Clerk's future in the court of Lord Governor depends on this contest, and in Adventurers, she sees a real opportunity to promote her status, even if they lose.

To this end, she will gladly provide everything Adventurers need - training, equipment, rules explanation, observation of the Amazing Athletes tactics, and can even share info beyond Games if Adventurers show interest in winning the Game.

Players can enter the Game with a team of at least 4 people (if you have fewer players, they can always ask NPCs from the Carnival for help!) - and as many as 8. The size of the opponent's team will be matched accordingly (so if players join the game with 6 people, for example, Amazing Athletes will also put 6 people on the field, with two sitting on the bench).

### TRAINING FOR THE GAME.

It takes 2 days of training (8 hours) for anyone to learn the ropes of the Game. Mechanically, without this training, characters can still take part in the games, but all rolls will be made with a disadvantage.

It takes 2 additional days of training (8 hours) to learn special maneuvers, described in a separate section below.

Characters can train simultaneously, and it's not necessary for everyone to learn everything - but will greatly improve the overall odds of victory.

## GERMAINE DE POIROT

Medium humanoid (halfling), lawful

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 27 (6d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

**Skills** History +4, Insight +4, Persuasion +5

**Senses** passive Perception 12

**Languages** Common, Elvish, Halfling

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Clerk's composure.** Wisdom (Insight) checks made to ascertain Germaine de Poirot's intentions or sincerity have disadvantage.

### Actions

**Rapier. Melee Weapon Attack:** +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 5 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

### Reactions

**Parry.** Germaine de Poirot adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, Germaine de Poirot must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.



## THE GAME'S HOW-TO-PLAY

The base of the Game - is that two teams ride on ponies, dressed as nightmares or unicorns, and hit a ball with a mallet to score it into the opposing team's goal area.

Teams roll initiative and act on turns almost as usual.

During their turn, contestants are considered mounted, and mounts are considered unintelligent creatures that act on contestants' turn. Simply speaking - on their turn contestants can move (using mount speed which is 30 feet), use an action (to hit a ball, cast magic, push his mount to move again), and use a bonus action.

Contestants can hit a ball with a mallet, which is considered an Attack. Mallet has a 5-feet-reach and is considered a simple melee weapon, with finesse property. The ball has an AC of 12. Each time contestants hits a ball, they must roll 2d4. The resulting roll indicates how far the ball rolls (in squares or hexes). Ball rolls in a straight line away from the hitter.

If contestants have proficiency in acrobatics or athletics, they can modify the distance ball rolls by 2 squares (either by adding 2 squares or subtracting 2 squares).

If the ball moves through the space of another contestant or their melee reach, that contestant can use their reaction to do a sleight of hand check (difficulty 15 for opposing teams, and 10 for the same team). On success, they stop the ball from moving any further and can place it in any empty square in their melee reach.

If the ball or the opponent is located in the melee reach of the contestant, they can use a reaction to provide a disadvantage on the opponent's attempt to hit the ball.

Whenever the ball moves into or through the "goal area" of any of the teams, an opposing team scores 1 point.

## RULES OF THE GAME

The field is 18 (width) by 28 (length - between two goal areas) hexes. Goal areas are located on the opposing sides of the field and have a size of 3 hexes (width) by 2 hexes (length).

Contestants on their mounts gather in the center of the field, in line, in front of each other, with a ball in the middle. Once the arbiter signals, the game begins - roll initiative.

The game lasts 10 rounds. At the end of round 10, the team with the most points wins. If teams have an equal amount of points, the team with the least amount of "falls" wins. If there is still equality, the game is prolonged by 5 rounds. The first team to score a point wins (or the first team to earn a "fall" loses). If by the end of round 15, there is no winner, the game ends with no winner.

At the beginning of the game, the ball is placed in the middle of the field. Each time the ball leaves the play area, or a goal is scored, teams must assemble in the middle of the field as in the beginning, and continue the game. Rounds are not counted during this time.

**It is prohibited during the game:**

- to dismount
- to damage opponents or their mounts
- to push/shove/kick opponents or their mounts
- to use magic on opponents or their mounts.
- to stand in the "goal area"
- to pick up the ball using hands

Each time a player breaks the rules (or rather, each time an arbiter notices it), his team earns a "fall". Once three falls are earned, that team automatically loses.

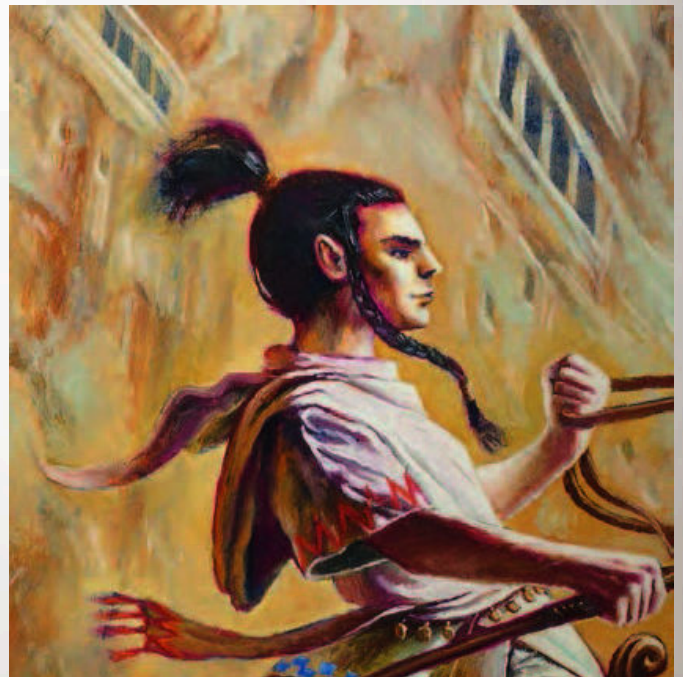
(yes, it is possible to decapitate, charm, cripple an enemy player and earn only 1 fall - do not just give that information to the player, though, let them discover it in play)

**Arbiter** has stat block (**Masked Arbiter**) and will be moving on the map with the players. Players can try to distract the arbiter and hurt opponents - use his perception and insight scores to set an appropriate DC.

## ADDITIONAL TRAINING

Players who completed additional training, have access to unique "bonus actions" while playing this game:

- **Feint** - make a deception or performance check against the insight of all opponents within a 10-foot radius around you. Each opponent that rolls less than you on this check cannot use his reaction to catch the ball or give you a disadvantage on attack till the end of your turn.
- **Maneuver** - make acrobatics or sleight of hand check, DC 12. On success, next time you hit the ball during this turn, you can move it in ANY direction, even through your space.
- **Called shot** - either roll perception or choose your passive bonus. Until the end of your turn, the chosen value replaces the DC for sleight of hand check to catch the ball for all players.
- **Push the mount** - you can try to push more out of your mount. Roll animal handling, DC 15. On success, your mount gains +10 to speed until the end of your turn. If the check is failed by more than 5, your mount instead receives a -10 to speed until the end of your turn.



## MASKED ARBITER

*Medium undead, lawfull evil*

**Armor Class** 16 (breastplate)

**Hit Points** 55 (10d8 + 10)

**Speed** 30 ft., climb 15 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)	8 (-1)

**Saving Throws** Dex +4, Wis +5

**Skills** Athletics +5, Insight +5, Perception +5

**Damage Resistances** necrotic

**Damage Immunities** poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, poisoned

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Stench.** Any creature that starts its turn within 5 ft. of the ghast must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be poisoned until the start of its next turn. On a successful saving throw, the creature is immune to the ghast's Stench for 24 hours.

**Masked.** Arbiter is dressed in fine clothing and a solid face mask. It can suppress its "stench" ability while wearing robes and mask.

It also requires a successful DC 20 insight or perception check to notice the undead nature of the creature.

Its voice, however, isn't masked and sounds harsh and ghastly.

**Turn Defiance.** The ghast and any ghouls within 30 ft. of it have advantage on saving throws against effects that turn undead.

### Actions

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage.

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) slashing damage. If the target is a creature other than an undead, it must succeed on a DC 10 Constitution saving throw or be paralyzed for 1 minute. The target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.



## THE AMAZING ATHLETES

A team of acrobats, that have won 9 previous games, and received a lot of favors from the Duchess. They are considered a family of famous athletes, while in reality - they are a band of misfits who stroke a lucky deal with hags and managed to overcome their differences to form a cohesive team.

It's a team of 8 individuals, all having the same base stat block, with some unique twists (expertise in sleight of hand, advantages in athletics, etc.) - see their stat blocks for details.

**Leader of the team - Amalie Thomas.** She was the one who managed to organize a team of misfits into a more or less coherent unit and help them wrench one victory after another.

Amalie is strong-willed, sharp-tongued, and keeps her team in line. Everybody does what Amalie says - most of the time.

**Right Hand of the Leader - Marguerite Martin.** Quiet but forceful when needed, it was Marguerite who helped other members of the team to gain control over their newfound abilities.

**Left Hand of the Leader - Desire Leroy.** Open, chatty, and optimistic, Desire is the soul of every party. While Amalie and Marguerite can be strict and assertive, Desire acts as a friend and a trusted companion.

**Joker - Sylvie Lambert.** Always smiling as if planning her next trick, and most of the time - she is. Sylvie enjoys practical jokes and puns - nobody is safe from her sense of humor.

**Smart one - Leopold Bertrand.** It was Leo who figured out a scheme to gain the right favor from the hag, and who betted on Amalie's ability to bring his friends in line when it will be essential. Sometimes feels bitter that his role in group success is underrated.

**Youngest of the Group - Rick Mercier.** Half-brother of Leroy, Rick is everything Desire is not. Rick is quiet, attentive, poetic, and romantic. He has big plans and often spends long times with Leopold, researching a way out of Dementliue. Though research is not the only reason they enjoy each others company.

**Hothead - Lou Moreau.** Lou loves parties, mischief, and drunken fights. When not training, she can often be found playing together with Yann in a band and then debouching well into the night.

**Musically Gifted - Yann Robert.** Yann is self-confident and a dreamer. There is no instrument that Yann can't play, no note that Yann can't take with his beautiful singing voice. However, his confidence often crumbles when facing Amalie, and his vast repertoire of words is scattered by the wind. He compensates for his inability to express his feelings to the Leader by writing music - if one listens carefully, the metaphors are more than clear.

All athletes are reluctant to talk about their contract with hags - because in Dementliue being unmasked often means death. They will admit only when pushed or tricked and will warn Amalie immediately of any such incidents. If adventurers try to push around any of the athletes, they will retaliate by making up an intricate scheme to accuse adventurers of any small misdemeanor and get them arrested by local guards.

For the competition, choose any of the athletes, matching the number of participants from the adventurers' side. **Amalie ALWAYS plays with her team.**

## AMALIE THOMAS

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 16 (studded leather, shield)

**Hit Points** 112 (15d8 + 45)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Str +8, Dex +5, Con +6

**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Athletics +11, Intimidation +5, Persuasion +5

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Brave.** Amalie Thomas has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

**Brute.** A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when Amalie Thomas hits with it (included in the attack).

### Actions

**Multiattack.** Amalie Thomas makes three melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. and range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage, or 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

**Shield Bash.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 10 (2d4 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

### Reactions

**Parry.** Amalie Thomas adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so Amalie Thomas must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

## MARGUERITE MARTIN

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 16 (studded leather, shield)

**Hit Points** 112 (15d8 + 45)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
20 (+5)	15 (+2)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Str +8, Dex +5, Con +6

**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Athletics +11, Intimidation +5, Perception +4

**Senses** passive Perception 14

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Brave.** Marguerite Martin has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

**Brute.** A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when Marguerite Martin hits with it (included in the attack).

### Actions

**Multiattack.** Marguerite Martin makes three melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft. and range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) piercing damage, or 14 (2d8 + 5) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

**Shield Bash.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +8 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 10 (2d4 + 5) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 16 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

### Reactions

**Parry.** Marguerite Martin adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so Marguerite Martin must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

## DESIRE LEROY

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 19 (studded leather, shield)

**Hit Points** 112 (15d8 + 45)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Str +5, Dex +8, Con +6

**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Athletics +8, Insight +4, Intimidation +5

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Brave.** Desire Leroy has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

**Brute.** A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when Desire Leroy hits with it (included in the attack).

### Actions

**Multiattack.** Desire Leroy makes three melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. and range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage, or 11 (2d8 + 2) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

**Shield Bash.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 7 (2d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

### Reactions

**Parry.** Desire Leroy adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so Desire Leroy must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.



## SYLVIE LAMBERT

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 19 (studded leather, shield)

**Hit Points** 112 (15d8 + 45)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
15 (+2)	20 (+5)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Str +5, Dex +8, Con +6

**Skills** Acrobatics +8, Athletics +8, Intimidation +5, Sleight of Hand +8

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Brave.** Sylvie Lambert has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

**Brute.** A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when Sylvie Lambert hits with it (included in the attack).

### Actions

**Multiattack.** Sylvie Lambert makes three melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. and range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (2d6 + 2) piercing damage, or 11 (2d8 + 2) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

**Shield Bash.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 2) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 13 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

### Reactions

**Parry.** Sylvie Lambert adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so Sylvie Lambert must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

## LEOPOLD BERTRAND

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 17 (studded leather, shield)

**Hit Points** 112 (15d8 + 45)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Str +6, Dex +6, Con +6

**Skills** Acrobatics +6, Athletics +9, Deception +5, Intimidation +5

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Brave.** Leopold Bertrand has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

**Brute.** A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when Leopold Bertrand hits with it (included in the attack).

### Actions

**Multiattack.** Leopold Bertrand makes three melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. and range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage, or 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

**Shield Bash.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

### Reactions

**Parry.** Leopold Bertrand adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so Leopold Bertrand must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

## RICK MERCIER

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 17 (studded leather, shield)

**Hit Points** 112 (15d8 + 45)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Str +6, Dex +6, Con +6

**Skills** Acrobatics +6, Animal Handling +4, Athletics +9, Intimidation +5

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Brave.** Rick Mercier has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

**Brute.** A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when Rick Mercier hits with it (included in the attack).

### Actions

**Multiattack.** Rick Mercier makes three melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. and range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage, or 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

**Shield Bash.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 8 (2d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

### Reactions

**Parry.** Rick Mercier adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so Rick Mercier must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

## LOU MOREAU

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

**Armor Class** 17 (studded leather, shield)

**Hit Points** 112 (15d8 + 45)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

**Saving Throws** Str +6, Dex +6, Con +6

**Skills** Acrobatics +6, Athletics +9, Intimidation +5, Performance +5

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Brave.** Lou Moreau has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

**Brute.** A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when Lou Moreau hits with it (included in the attack).

### Actions

**Multiattack.** Lou Moreau makes three melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. and range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage, or 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

**Shield Bash.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 8 (2d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

### Reactions

**Parry.** Lou Moreau adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so Lou Moreau must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.



## YANN ROBERT

Medium humanoid (any race), any alignment

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**Armor Class** 17 (studded leather, shield)

**Hit Points** 112 (15d8 + 45)

**Speed** 30 ft.

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STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	16 (+3)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	15 (+2)

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**Saving Throws** Str +6, Dex +6, Con +6

**Skills** Acrobatics +6, Athletics +9, Intimidation +5, Performance +8

**Senses** passive Perception 11

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

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**Brave.** Yann Robert has advantage on saving throws against being frightened.

**Brute.** A melee weapon deals one extra die of its damage when Yann Robert hits with it (included in the attack).

### Actions

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**Multiattack.** Yann Robert makes three melee attacks or two ranged attacks.

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft. and range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) piercing damage, or 12 (2d8 + 3) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack.

**Shield Bash.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +6 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 9 (2d4 + 3) bludgeoning damage. If the target is a Medium or smaller creature, it must succeed on a DC 14 Strength saving throw or be knocked prone.

### Reactions

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**Parry.** Yann Robert adds 3 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so Yann Robert must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

# THE TALENT CONTEST

Each time the Grand Masquerade is held, the City organizes an open contest for musicians and performers. Everyone, who looks the part, can participate in The Talent Contest to win a performance slot at the Masquerade. This is usually a lively event, as for many denizens of Port-a-Lucine, Talent Contest - is the only way to get into the much-coveted Grand Masquerade.

To get in, performers need to visit Lord Governor's Manor any day before the Talent Contest starts. There, a Clerk (**Germaine de Poirot**), responsible for the preliminary selection, takes applications from the contenders. He asks for the group's name, the short performance (to see the act) and, most importantly - the costumes and decorations. For the clerk, it is more important that contenders look the part, rather than act the part, so having fancy garb is the key to getting in.

All those who were approved, then participate in The Talent Contest. It is held in the Port-a-Lucine Opera House. Same group judges performances at all times - Lord Governor, Opera House director, and dean of Performance Arts of local University.

## GERMAINE DE POIROT

Medium humanoid (halfling), lawful

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 27 (6d8)

**Speed** 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
10 (+0)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)	14 (+2)	16 (+3)

**Skills** History +4, Insight +4, Persuasion +5

**Senses** passive Perception 12

**Languages** Common, Elvish, Halfling

**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Clerk's composure.** Wisdom (Insight) checks made to ascertain Germaine de Poirot's intentions or sincerity have disadvantage.

### Actions

**Rapier.** Melee **Weapon Attack:** +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. **Hit:** 5 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage.

### Reactions

**Parry.** Germaine de Poirot adds 2 to its AC against one melee attack that would hit it. To do so, Germaine de Poirot must see the attacker and be wielding a melee weapon.

## IF PLAYERS DECIDE TO PARTICIPATE

The contest is split into three parts. Each time, they will be trying to out-perform another group of contenders, earning points for their performance (mostly 1). In order to get into the Grand Masquerade as a performing troupe, it is enough to get just 1 point. However, to get a "prime slot", players will have to get 3 points for their performance. "Prime slot" at Grand Masquerade is especially important because during that time the Duchess herself appears to appreciate the talented folks of her domain, while at all other times it is a gamble whether she will be around for performance or not.

**For each part of the contest, first, make a roll to determine the DC and quality of the opponent's performance:**

- Roll 2d10+3 (or take 14) for the first round
- 2d10+5 (or take 17) for the second round
- 2d10+8 (or take 20) for the last round

**After rolling, describe the opposition** - these can be fire eaters, magic shows, acrobats, singers, bands, fighters, etc. If the roll is high - make opposition seem competent and impressive. If low - describe how they fail or stumble during the performance.

**Afterwards, the stage goes to the players.** Make them describe what their characters are doing, what skills or spells are used for the performance, how they work together to deliver the best act. They also need to choose one character, whose performance roll will determine the outcome. Modify that roll with bonuses or minuses, advantages or disadvantages depending on players actions and creativity.

**After all described their act,** and selected character made a roll, compare it with a previously set DC. Describe the outcome depending on the result:

- If players manage to beat set DC - they get 1 point.
- If players did not beat DC - they get 0 points.
- If they rolled a natural 20 on their check, they also get 1 additional point (even if the roll overall was less than the opposition).

**The contest goes in 3 rounds.** At the end, calculate the total amount of points:

- If it's at least 1 - the character's are invited to play at the Grand Masquerade. However, the time slot is less than ideal - if they need the Duchess to witness the performance, they will have to lure her to the stage somehow.
- If character's earned 3 or more points - they get a Prime Time slot, where the presence of the Duchess is guaranteed.
- You can throw in a little bonus for getting 4 or more points - like uncommon magic items, or some potions and scrolls. Courtesy of the Governor, for outstanding performance.

**See Part 2 - Events of the Masquerade for more details on the best spots.**

**All winners of the contest gain the invitation to the Grand Masquerade.** They are expected to perform at a given time slot, and will be prosecuted if they fail to do so (usually - jail time for up to 2 weeks, but the sentence could be "upped" to disintegration on the spot if the Duchess is involved).



## RED WIDOW THEATER

The Red Widow is a cabaret known for lively music, provocative dancing, and shady dealings. A gigantic statue of a spider, painted in garish crimson with a black hourglass shape on its abdomen, adorns the front roof of the building, inviting customers into its decadent web. At this shrine to decadent pleasures, attendees celebrate beauty and life in defiance of the crushing poverty and horror outside.

But the theater harbors horrors nonetheless: shape-shifters use the cabaret's intimate spaces to find prey. Though rumors persist of shape-shifting giant spiders that feast on unwitting customers, they fail to depress attendance at the theater's performances.

### PERSONALITIES

#### ANNABELL BLOOWANE

Proprietor of the Red Widow and leader of the Great Spider cult. She was once an agent of the Harpers, very good at disguises and subterfuge. Annabell was lured into Dementliue by the Caller (which she doesn't realize) and given a vision of the Great Spider that promised her power and escape.

Her cult is a desperate attempt at breaking free of the Dread Domains' grasp. However, decades of trying extinguished hope and subverted her motives. Now she truly believes in the coming of The Great Spider and researches rituals after rituals to bring this Great Old One from imprisonment.

Some time ago, The Caller contacted her again, in the guise of Jasper. He bargained for a rare tome of The Great Spider rituals, and in return asked to take care of Dolores. Annabell saw potential in the young lost girl and inducted her into the cult. For Caller it was a wrap on a couple of his schemes - Dolores was taken away, deprived of hope, and succumbed slowly to the cult of flesh-eaters, Annabell was pushed one last time over the line of "evil deeds for good" straight up into the hands of evil.

With a new book in hand, Annabell is slowly growing the number of victims that disappear at her cabaret. Now she needs to not only feed her flock but also ritual sacrifices to call a Great Old one into this world.

#### DOLORES D'HONAIRE (GREEN HAWK - SCENIC NAME)

Dancer at the Red Widow and an acolyte of the cult. She is a step-sister of the great Duchess but too afraid to admit it to anyone. She also suffered from the Caller's intrigues and thinks wholeheartedly that it was The Count and his friend who stood her up. Forced to find a way to survive she joined the theater and was slowly indoctrinated into the cult. She is not a true believer, but simply alone, lost, and too afraid to deny the cult's hospitality.

Dolores is tall, slender, and has curly brown hair and fine light-onyx skin. She moves with natural grace and when in a good mood, has a sarcastic and prickly character. However, these days she is mostly quiet, scared, and keeps to herself. Dolores is one of the finest dancers the Red Theater has - that's why Annabell is not rushing with initiating Dolores into a full-fledged cult member.

Dolores lives in a small house close to the theater and can be usually found either in the theater or in her house. Only rarely - once in a couple of days, she goes to the local market for food, or to the beach to stare at the distant lights of the D'Honaire Estate.

Dolores has no courage to face her step-sister herself.

Adventurers would have to persuade her to expose the Duchess in public. Depending on their argument and what they promise Dolores, the DC varies, however, 17 is a baseline.

Dolores has no physical proof that she is Duchess's step-sister, however, as Lupin can suggest, having proof rarely matters. The whole society is based on pretense and everyone assumes that the Duchess is the only one who holds any real power. Once someone can convincingly prove that Duchess is a fraud (and Dolores has plenty of childhood stories to weave a good plot) - everything crumbles.

#### BOUNCERS OF THE RED THEATER

Wearing red masks adorned with spider motifs, 4 bouncers are always present at the theater. They are the oldest and most trusted members of the cult, significantly advanced in their transformation. These creatures are far closer to the spiders than to humanoids - even when in humanoid guise, their movement betrays their monstrous nature.

#### PERFORMERS OF THE RED THEATER

Dancers, singers, musicians - a whole troop of people who make sure that the theater is running, and the fresh meat is lured in each day. All of them are cult members, but not all are initiated. Together with Dolores, 3 other performers - two dancers and a singer, are kept by Annabell away from initiation. 8 other performers are already initiated but have not advanced far enough to be unable to perform.



## ANNABELL BLOOWANE, GREAT SPIDER CULT LEADER

*Medium humanoid (initiated), evil-inclined*

**Armor Class** 16 (studded leather)  
**Hit Points** 136 (16d8 + 64)  
**Speed** 30 ft., climbing speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
11 (+0)	18 (+4)	18 (+4)	12 (+1)	11 (+0)	18 (+4)

**Saving Throws** Wis +3, Cha +7  
**Skills** Arcana +4, Deception +7, Perception +3, Religion +4, Stealth +7  
**Senses** blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13  
**Languages** any one language (usually Common)  
**Challenge** 6 (2,300 XP)

**Shapechanger.** Annabell Bloowane can use its action to polymorph into a giant spider, or back into its human form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its human form if it dies.

**Dark Devotion.** Annabell Bloowane has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

**Web Sense.** While in contact with a web, Annabell Bloowane knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

**Web Walker.** Annabell Bloowane ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

**Spider Climb.** Annabell Bloowane can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

**Spellcasting.** The Annabell Bloowane is a 14th-level spellcaster. Its spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). Annabell Bloowane has the following warlock spells prepared:

Cantrips (at will): *chill touch*, *eldritch blast*, *mage hand*, *minor illusion*, *poison spray*, *prestidigitation*, *shocking grasp*

1st-5th level (3 5th-level slots): *armor of Agathys*, *arms of Hadar*, *charm person*, *contact other plane*, *detect thoughts*, *dimension door*, *dissonant whispers*, *dominate beast*, *modify memory*, *telekinesis*, *vampiric touch*, *web*

### Actions

**Bite (Spider form only).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

**Scimitar (Humanoid form only).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) slashing damage.

**Web (Recharge 5–6, Spider form only).** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* The target is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 12 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 5; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

**(Bonus Action) Ethereal Jaunt.** Annabell Bloowane can magically shift from the Material Plane to the Ethereal Plane, or vice versa.

## DOLORES D'HONAIRE

*Medium humanoid (human), (Green Hawk)*

**Armor Class** 14 (leather armor)  
**Hit Points** 33 (6d8 + 6)  
**Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
12 (+1)	16 (+3)	12 (+1)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	18 (+4)

**Saving Throws** Dex +5  
**Skills** Acrobatics +5, Animal Handling +2, Athletics +3, Performance +8

**Senses** passive Perception 10  
**Languages** Common  
**Challenge** 1/2 (100 XP)

**Nimbleness.** Dolores d'Honaire can move through the space of any creature that is of the same size or larger than hers.

**Acrobatic prowess.** The Dolores d'Honaire ignores difficult terrain, and she can spend 5 feet of movement to escape from nonmagical restraints or being grappled.

### Actions

**Dagger.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d4 + 3) piercing damage.



## PERFORMERS OF THE RED THEATER

*Medium humanoid (initiated), cultist of the Great Spider*

**Armor Class** 13 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 27 (5d8 + 5)

**Speed** 30 ft., climbing speed 30 ft. (spider form only)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	8 (-1)	10 (+0)	14 (+2)

**Skills** Acrobatics +4, Deception +4, Performance +4, Religion +1, Stealth +4

**Senses** blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 10

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Shapechanger.** Performers of the Red Theater can use its action to polymorph into a giant spider, or back into its human form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its human form if it dies.

**Dark Devotion.** Performers of the Red Theater has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

**Web Sense.** While in contact with a web, Performers of the Red Theater knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

**Web Walker.** The Performers of the Red Theater ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

**Spider Climb (Spider form only).** Performers of the Red Theater can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

### Actions

**Bite (Spider form only).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 2) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

**Scimitar (Humanoid form only).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) slashing damage.

**Web (Recharge 5–6, Spider form only).** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* The target is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 12 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 5; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

# BOUNCER OF THE RED THEATER

Medium monstrosity (human-like), cultist of the Great Spider

**Armor Class** 14 (leather armor)

**Hit Points** 39 (6d8 + 12)

**Speed** 30 ft., climbing speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
16 (+3)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)	14 (+2)	8 (-1)

**Skills** Deception +1, Religion +1, Stealth +5

**Senses** blindsight 10 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** any one language (usually Common)

**Challenge** 2 (450 XP)

**Shapechanger.** Bouncer of the Red Theater can use its bonus action to polymorph into a giant spider, or back into its human-spider hybrid form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its human-hybrid form if it dies.

In addition to that, the form of the Giant Spider provides Bouncer of the Red Theater with multi-attack: one bite and one Web or two bite attacks.

**Dark Devotion.** Bouncer of the Red Theater has advantage on saving throws against being charmed or frightened.

**Web Sense.** While in contact with a web, Bouncer of the Red Theater knows the exact location of any other creature in contact with the same web.

**Web Walker.** The Bouncer of the Red Theater ignores movement restrictions caused by webbing.

**Spider Climb.** Bouncer of the Red Theater can climb difficult surfaces, including upside down on ceilings, without needing to make an ability check.

## Actions

**Multiattack (only in Giant Spider form).** The Bouncer of the Red Theater makes two attacks - one with its Bite and one with its Web or two with Bite.

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage, and the target must make a DC 11 Constitution saving throw, taking 9 (2d8) poison damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one. If the poison damage reduces the target to 0 hit points, the target is stable but poisoned for 1 hour, even after regaining hit points, and is paralyzed while poisoned in this way.

**Bouncer's club (hybrid form only).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d6 + 3) bludgeoning damage.

**Web (Recharge 5–6).** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, range 30/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* The target is restrained by webbing. As an action, the restrained target can make a DC 12 Strength check, bursting the webbing on a success. The webbing can also be attacked and destroyed (AC 10; hp 5; vulnerability to fire damage; immunity to bludgeoning, poison, and psychic damage).

**(Bonus Action) Ethereal Jaunt.** Bouncer of the Red Theater can magically shift from the Material Plane to the Ethereal Plane, or vice versa.





## RED WIDOW THEATER LIFE AND PERFORMANCES

Theater performs each evening (taking a day off after three-four performances) from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m. taking 3 copper for the entry. Sometimes, citizens and guests of Dementliue are given a "free ticket" as part of the Red Widow promotion campaign. These people are usually never seen again.

Performances include very unmodest dancing, singing, and acrobatics. However, if any visitor is asked about the specifics of the performances, they would be lost for words.

The scene is enchanted with powerful magic, which subtly mesmerizes the viewers the longer they observe the performance. However, it works only if the performers are actually good.

For every 5 minutes of observing the performance, viewers make a **Wisdom Saving Throw, with difficulty starting at 10 and rising by 2 each time**:

- **On failure**, viewers are entranced by the performance and don't notice anything that's going on around them - unless someone spends an action to shake them from a trance, or damage is taken.
- **Experienced adventurers after succeeding** at first save will feel that something is trying to enchant them. An **insight check** (or **passive Insight**) of **15** will suggest performance as the source of magic.

**1 hour into the show**, four of the bouncers in their spider form slowly descend from the ceiling, capturing each victim and moving them through corridors on the second floor to the sacrificial chamber.

## CULT OF THE GREAT SPIDER GOALS AND MOTIVES

The main goal of the Cult is to **summon into the Dementliue the Great Spider**. None of the cultists (even Annabell) can answer with any certainty who the Great Spider is, precisely, but all are feverishly loyal to it.

The ritual book in the Sacrificial Chamber in the theater describes a bloody and lengthy process that involves dozens of sacrifices to summon a Great Spider. Detailed examination with **DC 18 Arcana check** will reveal that the whole ritual is actually a very specific, once-only-usable Gate spell, that allows to bypass Domains of Dread protection to **summon a very specific demon from the Abyss (Bebilith - creeper of the Abyss) for exactly 1 day**.

The book was given to the cult by the **Caller**, and the summoning of the demon is a grand culmination of the tragic story of once-famous Harper Annabell Bloowane.

A **secondary goal** of the Cult is to **feed, gain more spider powers, and find new members**.

Each member of the cult at some point goes through a ritual, which grants them shape-shifting powers. However, with powers comes a need for humanoid flesh. The more you consume it - the stronger you become, more like a monstrous spider, less like a humanoid.

Unfortunately, this affects greatly the ability to perform (as Annabell discovered), thus best dancers are usually kept at arm's length from the ritual until a suitable replacement could be found.

## RED WIDOW THEATER INTERIOR

Inside of the Red Theater is a beautifully decorated space, with dimly-lit rooms and hallways, and an abundance of red in the style.

If not noted otherwise, rooms and corridors have 10-foot-high ceilings, dimly lit interiors and doors are locked with well-crafted locks (**DC 15 to picklock** when theater is closed, generally open when the show is underway).

The following section adds a clarification at what can be found at each section of the theater. Reference the plan on the following pages, and full-color battle map is included in the adventure.

### FIRST FLOOR, SECTION 1

Spacious and luxuriously decorated **main hall** of the theater. A reception booth is located **right near main entrance**, where Annabell can be usually found, collecting and selling tickets for the show.

Two staircases lead to the second floor. A rope with a sign "Employee only" crosses an entrance to each staircase.

Two doors lead into **corridors**, which lead to guest seats (**Section 2**) and scene, musicians pit (**Section 3**) and backstage (**Section 4**).

Doors leading from the corridors into the musicians pit also have signs on them "Employees only" and are often locked even during performance.

### FIRST FLOOR, SECTION 2

Here, seats are placed in ascending rows, facing the Main Scene. Ceiling here is 30-feet-high, and shaped like a dome.

**Perception check 17** (together with ability to see in the dark) and higher will allow adventurers to notice oval openings close to the ceiling, like vents leading somewhere.

### FIRST FLOOR, SECTION 3

Musicians pit and Main Scene are located here.

### FIRST FLOOR, SECTION 4

This area houses backstage zone and dressing rooms. Dressing rooms are locked when there is no performances, but are usually open during the show.

This is also an area where back door to the Theater is located. It's closed at all times, and usually guarded by at least one **Bouncer**.

One of the Dressing Rooms have a secret panel (DC to find - 15), which opens to reveal a circular staircase, going up - to **Section 6**.

### SECOND FLOOR, SECTION 5

Two narrow corridors from the first floor lead right into the workroom of the Theater proprietor (Annabell). This comfy office has a solid selection of books on various subjects (**Investigation roll of 14** or higher will allow players to find 1d4 warlock spellscrolls of 1st to 3d level).

A painting on the wall, depicting a lovely view of rolling hills and cozy manors, hides a secret path (Perception \ Investigation DC 15 to locate) to the tunnels that wrap around the **Sections 2 and 3**.

At evenings, and mornings, Annabell can usually be found in this room.

### SECOND FLOOR, BETWEEN SECTION 5 AND 6

Tunnels that connect **Section 5 and 6** are located at approximately 20 feet off the ground and have a set of narrow openings that lead into the hall below. Cultists use this tunnel to drag their entrances victims to their death.

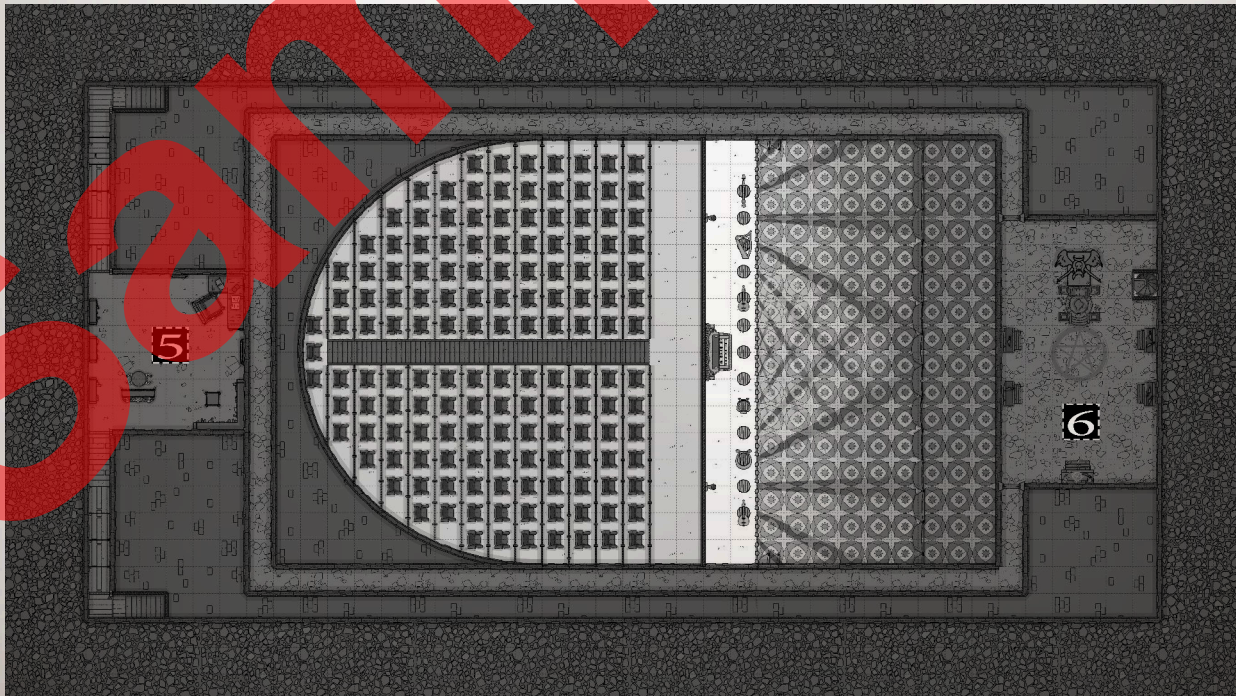
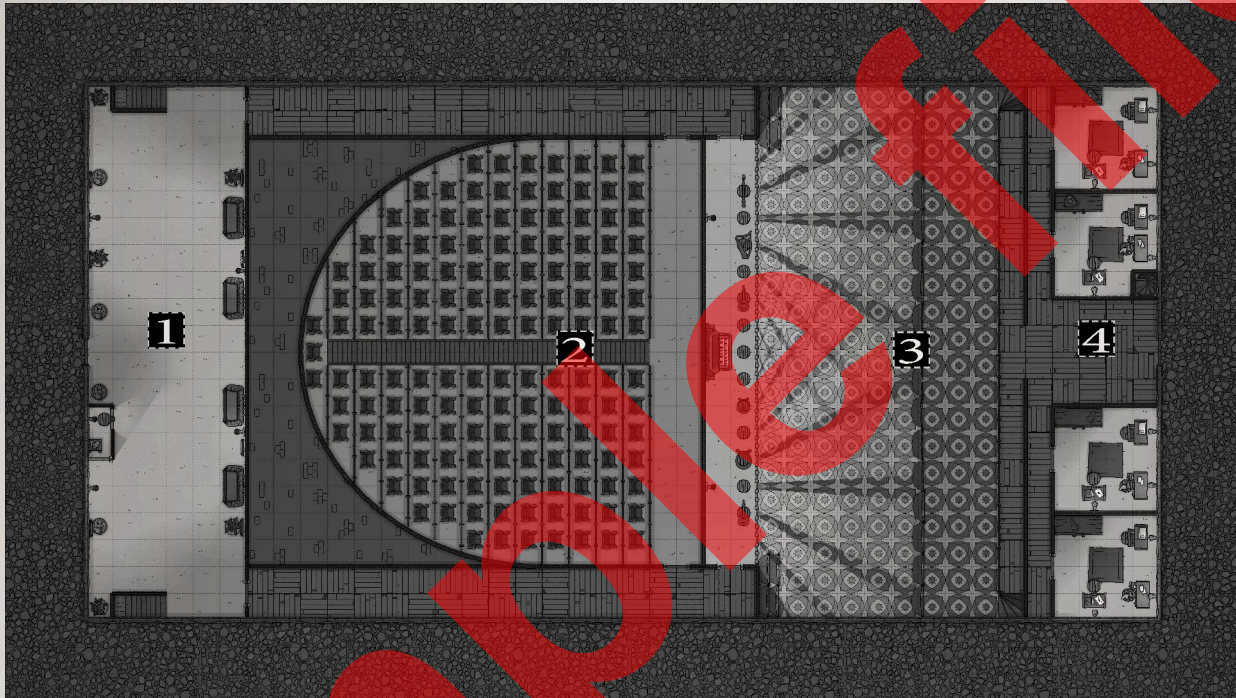


## SECOND FLOOR, SECTION 6

Here a secret Sacrificial Chamber is located. Doors to this room are usually unlocked. An altar at one end of the room depicts a huge spider-like creature. **Religion check DC 20** will reveal that this creature looks like **Bebilith, demon from the Abyss**.

Various smaller altars are located around the room. They host a set of ritualistic daggers (one of them is a **Dagger +1**, decorated with eyes and webs), and trinkets that were left from victims. You can use your favourite table for Trinkets (or the one from PHB) to generate some. Additionally, players can find here a **Luckstone**. Yes, ironic.

This room is usually empty, except after the show, when initiated cultists gather to feast, or during some celebratory gatherings like initiations.





## DEVELOPMENT

On the 7th day, The Grand Masquerade is held. Unless characters managed to free The Count of his curse by then, there is a high chance they would want to attend this event. The following chapter describes the Masquerade itself, how people usually get in, the timetable, and possible complications.

