

SHADOW OF THE KNIFE

An Unofficial RAVENLOFT® Adventure
for 4-6 characters of level 6-8

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INTRODUCTION

*Eight little whores, with no hope of heaven,
Gladstone may save one, then there'll be seven.
Seven little whores beggin for a shilling,
One stays in Henage Court, then there's a killing.
Six little whores, glad to be alive,
One sidles up to Jack, then there are five.
Four and whore rhyme aright,
So do three and me,
I'll set the town alight
Ere there are two.
Two little whores, shivering with fright,
Peek a cosy doorway in the middle of the night.
Jack's knife flashes, then there's but one,
And the last one's the ripest for Jack's idea of fun.*

—Anonymous (1888)

For the Dungeon Master

This adventure is set in the Zherisia cluster and details the fourteenth murder spree of the infamous killer, Bloody Jack. It occurs thirteen years after the Ravenloft adventure *Hour of the Knife*. Although it is intended as a sequel to that module, *Shadow of the Knife* is usable by both those who have played *Hour of the Knife* and those new to the murky city of Paridon. While both the PCs and the Paridoners have more information than they did last time, they discover new threats to deal with: the marikith of Timor, whose monstrous Hive Queen covets the *Fang of the Nosferatu*, and the new Bloody Jack, a golem made by Emil Bollenbach from the flesh of doppelgangers. The adventure is also intended to contain a few scenes reminiscent of *Hour of the Knife*, but given a few new twists.

As this adventure is primarily a murder investigation, the plot is fairly linear. However, players typically do not appreciate being led around by the nose. It is important throughout *Shadow of the Knife* to

ensure that the players feel that they are masters of their own fates. If they want to pursue avenues not detailed in this adventure, let them, and change the events to suit their actions. If they kill Jenny in the belief that she is a doppelganger, fill her role in the adventure with Mrs. Haversham or Inspector Wortle instead. Not every avenue needs to lead to success, and not every encounter should be due to their actions. However, a few judicious changes to reward enterprising (or unusually stupid) ideas will ensure that everyone enjoys themselves and you are not accused of heavy-handedness. Particularly ensure that Bloody Jack's numerous escapes from captivity seem natural and unforced.

Also note that the term 'doppelganger' is used through out this adventure. All the doppelgangers in Paridon are dread doppelgangers; the shorter term is used to make the module easier to read.

Adventure Background

The last fifteen years have been hard on Paridon. In many ways, the city is dying. First, in 740 BC, the Grand Conjunction severed the city from almost all of its croplands and natural resources, leaving the Paridoners entirely dependent on what little food they could grow in sickly rooftop gardens. Then, in 742 BC, the infamous killer 'Bloody Jack' returned for his thirteenth murder cycle (as detailed in *Hour of the Knife*).

The events of this year were truly shocking for the Paridoners, since a group of foreign adventurers were able to prove – before they abruptly disappeared – that Paridon was the hunting ground of doppelganger clans. In fact, they even revealed that there was no 'Bloody Jack' – each killing spree had been committed by a different doppelganger. People had long suspected that Bloody Jack's identity was no simple matter – by 742 BC, Jack had been killing every thirteen years for 169 years, after all – but they could not have been prepared for the truth. The Bloody Jack killings were a cyclic blood-magic ritual performed in the service of a nameless and (literally) faceless bogeyman believed to exist only in the minds of children and madmen. This creature was and is Sodo, the doppelganger lord of the domain. The people of Paridon know of him as Flickerflame, a name coined by the *Newsbill* following descriptions of his constantly changing appearance.

After the PCs left Paridon at the end of *Hour of the Knife* and Sodo destroyed his traitorous servant Roja, the doppelganger lord recovered the *Fang of the Nosferatu* and within days the killings started again. Everyone of age remembers how 'Bloody Jack' killed five people, stopped for a few days, then killed six more, as though he'd had to start over again. With the

death of their leader, the jackalweres scattered. Many remain in Paridon, but they are no longer organized as they once were.

In 744 BC, the domain of Timor replaced Paridon's sewers. This change was not immediately noticed. All of the tunnels beneath the city – the sewers, river channels and the coalmines – were replaced, but in the upper levels the changes were subtle. Workers who had cause to go into the tunnels soon realized that something had changed the layout of the area, but they didn't know the tunnels had become home to a monstrous species. Even in the present day the existence of the marikith is not commonly known. They are considered bogeymen, 'Shadow Killers' that are frequently mentioned in the *Newsbill* but whose existence has never been proven. Most people assume witness reports are just confused sightings of doppelgangers.

The doppelgangers themselves are well aware that something is in the sewers, though they too are confused as to the nature of the marikith. The appearance of Timor drove Sodo from his underground lair and into the city proper. Since then, most of the doppelgangers who entered the sewers vanished. Some doppelgangers and jackalweres were even kidnapped and dragged into Timor. Needless to say, Sodo and his minions are quite worried about this threat to their dominion over Paridon, even if they are uncertain as to what exactly they are facing.

Still, as the time for the next cycle of killings approached, Sodo was more concerned about avoiding a disaster of the previous cycle. He began planning for this ritual years ago. In 743 BC, Paridoner doppelgangers lured Emil Bollenbach to the city and Sodo recruited him. Emil is now posing as Dr. Thomas Cream, Paridon's coroner. He is recognized as a brilliant doctor, but his bedside manner is so unsettling that no living person will serve as his patient.

At Sodo's bidding, Emil has created a new Bloody Jack – an improved version of one of his previous experiments, the Doppelganger Golem (see *Children of the Night: The Created*). Not only is the golem able to perfectly mimic the form of the last person it killed, but if it eats their brain, it also gains their memories, improving its ability to pose as its victim. However, the golem never forgets its true identity; beneath its stolen surface thoughts, Bloody Jack remains an utterly emotionless automaton.

Sodo has assigned two doppelganger assistants, Sorjan and Luda, to help Bloody Jack. To ensure their loyalty, he has fitted both doppelgangers and Emil with *timed scarabs of death*. He is confident that, by controlling the creator and Jack's assistants, he can maintain control of the golem (as fitting the construct with a *scarab* would be useless; the golem has no need of a heart).

Meanwhile, unbeknownst even to the doppelgangers, Timor's Hive Queen has learned of the *Fang of the Nosferatu* over the course of the past decade. The magical blade has been silently calling to

her for much of that time, hinting at the power that she will possess if she can gain control of the *Fang*. The Hive Queen has come to believe that if she can gain the dagger's magical protection, her offspring will share that protection. As the time for the ritual approaches, the marikith are massing in the sewers, prepared to wrest control of the *Fang* from the doppelgangers.

Adventure Synopsis

The PCs arrive in Paridon a few hours before midnight on the day the Bloody Jack killings are due to begin again. After a brief encounter with a marikith, they meet Jenny the tindergirl, who shows them to a guesthouse. They arrive to find that the woman in the room beneath them is giving birth. In reality, the woman and her husband are Sorjan and Luda, and the midwife summoned to deal with the birth becomes Jack's first victim. The golem assumes her form and the corpse is concealed beneath the floorboards.

The next day, the PCs are free to explore the city. That night, although there is no sign of Bloody Jack, they witness a marikith kidnapping attempt.

By the third day, the midwife's body is beginning to rot and, drawn by the smell, the PCs find Jack's first victim. They must track down the killer (who is now posing as her husband), and with a little help from Sorjan, even manage to capture it briefly. However, Jack escapes with a new form, leaving the heroes without a clue once more.

The next day, the PCs continue trying to find Bloody Jack and briefly meet Sodo, who warns them to leave Jack alone if they don't want an even worse menace – the marikith – to overwhelm Paridon. However, they again manage to capture Jack with the help of Edward Chaswick, a cleric of the Divinity of Mankind. Chaswick becomes Bloody Jack's fourth victim and in the chaos caused by another marikith attack, the golem escapes again.

On the fifth night of the ritual, Jack hunts down his creator. While Emil may become Jack's fifth victim, the PCs should manage to destroy (or at least incapacitate) the golem, disrupting the ritual but allowing the marikith to steal the *Fang of the Nosferatu*. The PCs must then pursue the *Fang* into Timor, to prevent the Hive Queen from harnessing its power.

Remember that this synopsis is simply a guide, not a dictation of how your game should be run. Be prepared to be flexible and reward player ingenuity.

THE ZHERISIA CLUSTER

Wild animals never kill for sport.

*Man is the only one to whom the torture
and death of his fellow creatures is
amusing in itself*

—James Anthony Froude,
Oceana

PARIDON

Paridon is a bleak city domain of thick fog, narrow streets and thundering carriages, where paranoia, starvation and violent crime are rampant. Its claustrophobically narrow streets wind among the forbidding buildings, cloaked with fog and peopled by dark figures. Some of these are the sober, polite humans that people Paridon; others are creatures far darker that feed upon humanity's fear and industry.

Appearances are very important to the people of Paridon; standards are everything to these somber folk. They are always polite, reserved and as well dressed and clean as possible.

The men of Paridon wear dark woolen pants, cotton or silk shirts, high-button boots and heavy cloaks or capes to keep out the ever-present fog. Gentlemen wear top hats, while working men wear cloth caps or bowler hats.

Women are expected to have all of their skin (except their faces and sometimes their hands) covered at all times, lest they drive men around them to crimes of passion. As such, they wear long dresses, high-button boots, gloves and bonnets. They wear light cloaks while outside.

Life has been much harder for the Paridoners since the doppelgangers were exposed in 742 BC. The realization that there were shapeshifters everywhere in the city erupted into full-blown paranoia for some years after the revelation, but the fear has settled down more recently (simply because it has to, or the city would have destroyed itself).

These years of terror have left their mark, however. Paridoners dislike small groups; they prefer to be either completely, truly alone, or surrounded by a large group. This is simple survival; no one can sneak up on a misanthrope, and in a large group, not everyone can be doppelgangers. The City Guard never patrol in groups of less than three. Ironically, they will

also take a foreigner or eccentric into their confidences far more readily than they would a childhood friend. After all, doppelgangers only assume the forms of close friends and family and excel at fitting into society, so they only ones that can't be doppelgangers are strangers and madmen!

The city's population has dropped dramatically over the past thirteen years. This is not only due to predation from the marikith, but also to a deep fear of intimacy. In a world where those closest to you may also be the most dangerous, the rates of marriage and childbirth have plummeted. Paridon was once one of the largest cities in Ravenloft; now, only 11,000 people live there. However, the population density remains quite high, especially in the poor districts of the West End. Ten years ago, the city council evicted many people (all lower class, of course) from their homes on the outskirts of the city, forcing them to live in tenements closer to the center of Paridon. The abandoned houses were demolished, their stone and lumber reused and the ground tilled for crops. This had the added effect of making life harder for the doppelgangers as well; with fewer abandoned houses to hide in, capturing exposed doppelgangers became far easier.

Fog is an ever-present fact of life in Paridon. While it can range from nothing more than a light mist to a thick 'pea-souper' of moisture and airborne soot, it never truly vanishes. On an average day, visibility only extends to about 100'. At night, visibility is only 10', or 20' if a lantern is near by.

Paridon Locations

The Temple of the Divine Form

This is the home of Paridon's unique religion, the Divinity of Mankind. This sect's main tenet is that humans are the highest form of life, and to seek perfection of the mind, body and spirit is the highest virtue. The Temple itself is a huge, sprawling work of gothic architecture, filling an entire block in the prestigious North Shore of Paridon.

The temple has innumerable wings housing gyms, rooms for meditation, schools, libraries, and art museums. Most of these are closed to the public; only those accompanied by a monk or cleric are allowed. Nonhumans may actually find it easier to gain access to the temple than uninitiated humans – priests are always engaged in research into the human condition and would be grateful for participants in their experiments.

Since the existence of doppelgangers was exposed thirteen years ago, a rift has opened in the church.

Most of the clergy believe that doppelgangers are evil creatures that should be destroyed, but a small sect – called the Philosophy of Humanity – believe that they are merely flawed and attempting to attain the divine state of humanity. They believe that doppelgangers can be ‘saved’ by trapping them in human form. Not surprisingly, this sect knows far more about doppelgangers than anyone else in Paridon, but their goals are also known and frowned upon by the rest of the clergy, the city watch, and the general public. If the PCs start asking about doppelgangers, they will probably be directed to the Temple. Once there, priests will direct them to the wing that houses the Philosophy, which opens onto its own courtyard in Wadding Street.

All members of both the mainstream clergy and the Philosophy wear *rings of mind shielding*. They are typically clerics, adepts, monks and alchemical philosophers (see *Van Richten’s Arsenal*). Clerics of the Divinity of Mankind have access to the Knowledge, Law and Strength domains.

Mrs. Haversham’s Boarding House

The place where the PCs are most likely to base themselves for the duration of their stay in Paridon is the boarding house where Jenny lives. It is a large (at least by Paridon’s standards), two-story building. Above the green front door is a shabby sign depicting a bed, with ‘B & B’ written beneath. The gutters hang crooked and the bricks beneath them are stained with rust. However, all of the windows have tiny flower boxes and freshly painted shutters. The general impression is of a poor establishment that is trying hard to better itself.

The owner is Mrs. Haversham, a thin, peevish woman concerned only with running a respectable boarding house. She is cantankerous, stubborn and has a dictatorial grasp over her establishment, although she is never blatantly rude and never, ever spies upon her guests. If any of her boarders are doppelgangers, she doesn’t want to know.

The boarding house has a large common room where the boarders and Mrs. Haversham take their breakfasts together and relax in the evening. It is populated by several threadbare armchairs, low coffee tables, cheap works of art and an enormous teak dining table that Mrs. Haversham polishes daily. A rickety staircase in one corner leads up to a hall giving access to the rooms on the second floor. Several doors, each with a shiny brass number attached to it, open into the ground floor bedrooms. One of these is home to ‘Henry’ and ‘Lucy’ – Bloody Jack’s doppelganger accomplices – and another belongs to Jenny. Her room has a connecting door to the room next door, which houses her crippled father, Philip. Another door opens onto the privy, and another into Mrs. Haversham’s private chambers and the kitchen.

Each room has two relatively comfortable beds. Mrs. Haversham will be quite scandalized if a man and

a woman try to sleep in the same room without proof that they are married.

Burton Townhouse

This building, home to Bloody Jack’s first two victims, is located on a quiet avenue in South Bank (home to many aristocratic and upper class families). A gray stone wall separates the estate from the street; a bronze plaque that reads, “Dr. George Burton, M.D.” is set into the wall beside a wrought iron gate. The house is neatly maintained and even has a small garden in the front yard.

The house itself is quite elaborate, with several halls, suites, sitting rooms and pantries. It is in every way typical of what one would expect of an upper class doctor – a skeleton hangs in one of the parlors, the house is decorated with ancient hunting trophies and understated portraits of Burton’s ancestors, and the servants are quiet and discreet.

Outside the back door of the townhouse is a small shed for holding coal. The shed is locked by a heavy iron padlock. The door has a hardness of 5, 10 hp, and a break DC of 15. The Open Locks DC is 20. It is here that Sorjan and Luda hide Burton’s body.

City Guard Headquarters

The City Guard is based in a small building on Bell Street in the middle class district of East Side. It is only a single story tall and abuts the Coronal Offices next door. The east wing of the building is home to offices belonging to the senior officers, archives detailing most crimes over the past twenty years and descriptions of Bloody Jack’s last five rampages, a mess hall and an armory. Separated from this by a heavy iron door (hardness 10, 60 hp, break DC 28, Open Locks DC 33) are the cells. The armory is protected by a strong wooden door and contains a large number of truncheons, short swords, manacles, shields, helmets, pistols, gunpowder and even some rare alchemical devices like tanglefoot bags. Unfortunately, requisitioning one of these devices is bureaucratic nightmare. Assume that obtaining unusual equipment from the armory takes one full day.

Until recently, the guard headquarters were housed in the far smaller station in Westminster Street in the West End. However, thirteen years ago the then-Chief Constable was revealed to be a doppelganger working with Sir Edmund Bloodsworth. This prompted a massive investigation and reform of the Guard, and the headquarters were moved into its current building.

The cells are designed to accommodate four people each, although in a pinch up to six can squeeze inside. The front part of the cell is a typical grid of iron bars, allowing the guard to keep an eye on prisoners without coming too close to them. It has a hardness of 10, 60 hp and a break DC of 25. The cells closest to the guard station each have a tiny window, about one foot square, set with heavy bars. The cells closest to the coroner’s office are set into the side of a hill and don’t

have any windows. Each cell also has a small mattress, home to countless parasitic insects, and a chamber pot.

The current chief constable of Paridon is Inspector James Wortle, a man very close to snapping. His face is ravaged by alcohol, lack of sleep and the stress of trying to police a city where anyone could be a monster and criminals can change form at will. He is the fifth chief constable in thirteen years. However, he is competent and desperately wants to see Bloody Jack stopped. If one of the heroes is killed during the adventure, Wortle is a good substitute to fill out the party.

Several smaller guard stations are scattered throughout Paridon.

Coronial Offices

Note: To avoid slips of the tongue, Emil Bollenbach is referred to through most of this adventure as Dr. Thomas Cream. As far as the humans of Paridon are concerned, that is his only name, and the deception should delay players who are familiar with Ravenloft from ruining the surprise too early.

The coroner's office and morgue is a forbidding stone building that looks more like a prison or asylum than a doctor's office. The basement of the building joins onto the cellblock of the guard headquarters, a relic from the days when the offices were the guard hospital. The door at this end of the jail is an equally heavy iron door, and although it is kept shut it is almost never locked. If anyone tries the latch, the door swings open easily.

The morgue occupies the basement. Due to being built on the side of a hill, both the morgue and the doctor's office above opens onto the street. Although the morgue door is often kept open to let light into the room, it is still a dark and forbidding place, suffused with mist. A cool room is set into the side of the hill to hold the bodies when they are not being examined. The morgue walls are painted a dark green that seems to absorb the lamplight. The low-hanging lights illuminate little more than the examination benches – the corpses are thrown into stark relief, while the rest of the room is filled with flickering shadows. The morgue stinks of half-digested food, rotten flesh and, above all, the cloying scent of formaldehyde.

The upper stories are slightly more hospitable. The first floor holds a waiting room, which opens onto Bell Street, a room for displaying corpses to their relatives for identification, and a medical library. The floor above that is Dr. Cream's private office and living quarters. The private stairway leading to this floor has a door at either end; both are always locked and only Dr. Cream has the keys. These doors have hardness 5, 15 hp, a break DC of 18 and an Open Locks DC of 30. Dr. Cream's private chambers contain damning evidence of his crimes: a heavily annotated and dog-eared copy of *Van Richten's Guide to the Created*, full of disparaging remarks and ranting, and a series of notebooks describing Emil's career of creating golems, including Bloody Jack.

The *Newsbill* Offices

The *Newsbill* is Paridon's daily newspaper. It is little more than a single, large piece of paper, printed on both sides with salacious rumors and lurid woodcuts. It is not controlled by the aristocracy, and occasionally prints articles that are critical of the council's actions. More often, it reports sightings of Shadow Killers (the marikith), gossip, and the results of criminal trials. It is not a highbrow, objective newspaper, but it is remarkably popular amongst Paridoners from all walks of life. It can be bought from newspaper boys almost anywhere in the city for two pence (cp).

The *Newsbill* office is a large warehouse in Pavilion Road, in the West End. A small door at street level opens into the reception area, where some secretaries entertain those who bring them news. A door behind this opens into the print shop itself, which is filled with bales of paper, two enormous printing engines, and the other equipment necessary for the mechanical aspects of the paper's production. A staircase against one wall leads to the reporter's offices, which are above the reception area.

The chief of the *Newsbill*'s small staff is William Thompson. Like the rest of his staff, Thompson is a muckraker, interested only in scandal and the money it brings. He is also an amateur blackmailer, having realized long ago that sometimes it is more lucrative *not* to print an article than to publish it. He employs a small army of rumormongers and spies that double as newspaper boys, enabling him to hear of any interesting events almost as they occur. While William himself is not a doppelganger, from the way he sustains sales by preying on the city's fears, he might as well be some kind of monster.

The Clock Tower

The Clock Tower is a marvel of Paridon technology. The cottage-sized clock mechanism at the top of the tower is regulated by descending weights, making it only necessary to wind the clock once per month (the weights are dragged back to the top of the tower by a team of oxen and a sturdy series of pulleys). The bells, which hang from the bottom of the clock mechanism, are struck by clockwork devices, not bell ringers, and they can be heard from everywhere in the city. Outside, a small platform encircles the top of the tower, allowing the clock faces to be cleaned.

The inside of the clock tower is almost completely empty; the building is little more than a façade supporting a narrow wooden staircase that winds its way up to the clock mechanism. The tower has no lights or windows anywhere inside it, although a massive oil lantern illuminates the clock faces at night. The enormous lead weights hang in the gloom only a few feet away from the stairs, supported by thick steel cables. These cables have a hardness of 15 and 60 hp. If they are severed, the weight goes crashing to the ground with enough force to crush a house. Anyone under the weight when it falls must make a Ref save

(DC 25) or be killed instantly. Even if they save, they take 5d6 damage from flying splinters of stone and wood. Everyone else in the base of the tower must make a Ref save at the same DC or take 5d6 damage from shrapnel too. A successful save indicates half damage. Cutting the cables supporting a bell is equally difficult and has the same effect, although the thunderous peal caused by the bell striking the ground causes all those who fail a Fort save (DC 20) to be deafened for 3d6 rounds.

Trying to tamper with the clock mechanism (to make the clock run faster, for example) requires a Disable Device check (DC 20) to achieve the desired effect. However, the wielder of the *Fang of the Nosferatu* can instinctively tell when midnight approaches, so tampering with the clock will do little more than confuse and endanger innocents.

TIMOR

In Timor, the sewers lead eternally downwards, funneling their filth deep into the earth, not away from the city. The stench of rot hangs in the choking air, becoming dangerous foul or explosive with no warning. The endless miles of brick tunnels are lightless and confusing – a literal labyrinth. Huge centipedes scuttle beneath curtains of slime. Red eyes glimmer in the darkness before abruptly disappearing, and footsteps echo off damp stone. Timor is a bewildering complex of corridors, full of loathsome, half-glimpsed life. The sensation of being stalked is intense and sickening, and most travelers simply collapse and wait for Timor’s horrors to close in on them. Those that don’t find the tunnels twist ever downwards, towards the waiting Hive Queen...

Exploring Timor

No map has been provided for the confusing maze of Timor. Whatever direction the PCs travel in, they will eventually come to the Hive Queen’s lair. Until then, new tunnels seem to open at illogical intervals and continue for random lengths. For every 10 minutes that the heroes spend in Timor, roll of the table below to determine how the sewers are laid out.

For example, the adventurers enter Timor through a manhole. They decide to travel to the west. After ten minutes, the DM rolls a d12, getting a 11. The adventurers come across a pipe leading deeper into Timor set into the floor of the original tunnel, so they must decide whether to go down or continue on straight. They decide to go down. After ten minutes of climbing, the DM rolls the d10 again and gets a 4 – the pipe ends, and the tunnel leads away to the right.

1d12 roll	Result
1–2	Sloped, straight tunnel
3	Turns left
4	Turns right

5	Y-intersection
6	T-intersection
7–8	4-way intersection
9–10	Corridor ends in downpipe
11	Downpipe; tunnel also continues in original direction
12	Pipe; up and down

It is probably a good idea to note down the path of the sewers the heroes take in case they want to retrace their steps. Of course, given that Timor is an unholy place composed of solid evil and terror, it is equally acceptable to have the lower levels shift and change behind the PCs.

Feel free to use whatever encounters are necessary to impress Timor’s unwholesome nature upon the players. The haze from decomposing matter halves the radius of even the brightest lights, which occasionally sputter out for no reason, as though the darkness resents the light intruding into its domain. Wounds threaten to become infected with filth fever or worse. Timor is home to many loathsome forms of life, such as vermin and oozes, as well as the lurking marikith. As they get deeper and deeper in the labyrinth of sewers, the PCs will encounter more and more marikith hunters. While they will shadow the adventurers for a while, trying to frighten them and feed off their terror, eventually they will try to kidnap the heroes to use in the Queen’s ritual to control the *Fang of the Nosferatu*. Anyone who is kidnapped is dragged to the Hive Queen’s lair and sealed into its grotesque island for midnight on the last day.

Even if the characters manage to avoid the marikith, they are not out of danger. Timor is a web of evil, and those who bring evil into the sewers may find themselves ensnared. Anyone who commits an evil act in Timor (anything worthy of a powers check) immediately begins transforming into a marikith hunter. This process takes 1d6 hours to complete, but after the first thirty minutes the character must make a Will save (DC 20) every minute or be *dominated* by the Hive Queen. This is why Sodo’s minions have been vanishing; almost all the doppelgangers and jackalweres who entered the sewers became marikith. The marikith have even been kidnapping jackalweres to increase their numbers.

A *wish*, *miracle* or *atonement* spell can reverse the transformation. Being exposed to direct sunlight for 1 continuous hour will also end the effect, but the victim is thereafter overcome with a terrible fear of bright light. They must make a Fear save (DC 25) to enter any light brighter than a lantern flame.

THE FIRST DAY

*That night the empty corridors
Were full of forms of fear;
And up and down the iron town
Stole feet we could not hear.*

—Oscar Wilde

NIGHT ONE

A Rude Introduction

The adventure begins with the PCs appearing from the Mists in the gloomy city of Paridon. Read the following to the players, making any adaptations necessary for your campaign.

After traveling through the blinding white mist for what seems like hours, you suddenly notice a faint yellow tinge creeping into the fog. For a moment you can't be sure whether the color is your imagination or not, but it steadily grows in intensity until the fog all around you is pale yellow. At the same moment, you feel the sensation of cobbles beneath your feet.

A few steps later, a gray stone wall bearing an oil lantern looms out at you. The fog thins enough in the lamplight for you to make out another wall about ten feet away, almost hidden behind a pile of wooden crates. You seem to be in a narrow street of some kind. Thick fog presses in on you from all sides.

The heroes have appeared in an alley behind a green grocer on the night that Bloody Jack is due to return. Paridon lies sleeplessly in its bed; everyone is terrified that they will become the murderer's first victim.

The alley is about seventy feet long. The heroes have appeared forty feet from the opening. The crates are from the previous day's wares and are waiting to be picked up and reused. 'J. H. Pearcey's and Sons' is written across the front of each in Zherisian. Approximately thirty feet behind the PCs, just outside the glow of the lantern, the alley ends in a solid wall. A sewer grating is set into the ground just in front of it.

This grating is currently the focus of attention of a lone marikith lurking in the shadows at the mouth of the alley. The Hive Queen has been sending scouts to the surface, trying to discover where Sodo has hidden

the *Fang of the Nosferatu*. It is under strict instructions to avoid attracting attention, so the marikith is not willing to fight its way past the PCs. Unfortunately, this sewer grating is the only entrance to Timor for several blocks, so the marikith must get past them somehow.

Allow the heroes to look around the alley and come to terms with their surroundings. No other people are within earshot; the night is eerily silent. However, if anyone approaches the mouth of the alley, they may discover the marikith.

The first character to go near the main street must make a Spot check (DC 24). If they succeed, they are able to see a dark humanoid form lurking in a doorway. The figure's eyes flash red – the only feature that can be distinguished on the misshapen creature – and the figure scuttles a few steps away. It is clear from the way it moves that the creature is not human.

The PC has only a single round to act. If they delay at all, the marikith squeezes itself into a drainpipe (taking 1 full round action to do so) and hides until the PCs leave. To the PCs, it may seem that the figure suddenly vanished into the fog.

If the Spot check fails and the PC doesn't notice the marikith, it decides to distract them and slip past. It begins imitating the sound of slow, methodical footsteps heading away from the alley along the main street. The PCs can make a Listen check (DC 18) to avoid being taken in by the ventriloquism; if they succeed (or still don't leave the alley), the marikith squeezes itself into the drainpipe as described above. Allow any PCs within a reasonable distance of the marikith to make a Spot check (DC 22) to see it move.

If the heroes are fooled by its mimicry, the marikith slips behind them and, dropping any pretense of stealth, runs for the sewer. It stops trying to fool the PCs as soon they pass it, so it seems that the footsteps ahead of the PCs suddenly fall silent to be replaced by running feet behind them. As it passes under the lantern, the PCs see a bulky black shape with glistening skin. Although it is shaped like a human, its movements seem oddly disjointed. The creature runs full tilt for the far wall, abruptly vanishing just before hitting it. (It dives and rolls through the 1' long sewer opening as a free action).

The purpose of this scene is obviously to give the PCs an alarming brush with a marikith. They should catch a glimpse, nothing more; under no circumstances should they be able to capture or kill it. At this point, it may seem that the characters have arrived in a city inhabited only by fog and timid, subhuman creatures. Even though the encounter is brief and not threatening, it should leave the heroes a little perturbed. What was that creature and how did it vanish so quickly?

Moving On

After this momentary encounter, the PCs are free to head on into Paridon. They are only a few streets away from a busy road, so after a little while, the number of lanterns increases and the sound of carriages and calling voices reaches their ears. Once they reach this street, continue with *An Offer of Hospitality*.

An Offer of Hospitality

Ream Street is an important market street on the north side of Paridon. Even the imminent return of Bloody Jack is not enough to deter the hawkers, grog carts and shoppers that throng the streets. After the eerie silence of the back streets, Ream Street is a brightly lit confusion of people, all shouting at each other in Zherisian. Every so often a carriage rumbles through the crowd, adding to the press and chaos.

Since the PCs are unlikely to be able to communicate with any of the vendors, one of their first encounters is with Jenny, a thin young woman trying to sell homemade tinderboxes to the passers by.

After a few moments of staring at the foggy night market and listening to the babble of foreign voices, you suddenly realize that someone is speaking to you.

A young woman is standing at your elbow, dressed in a long, somewhat careworn gray dress that covers her from neck to ankles. She smiles prettily at you from beneath her straw boater, and offers you a small box, saying something in her own language.

Seeing your confusion, the woman frowns slightly and says, "Are you all right?"

Jenny speaks any one language spoken by most of the PCs (such as Balok or Mordentish).

By happy coincidence, Jenny's mother ('rest her soul') was an explorer who came to Paridon a little over 25 years ago. She died of consumption four years ago, leaving Jenny able to speak her native language and solely responsible for supporting herself and her crippled father. As such, she is desperate to earn whatever money she can and insatiably curious about these travelers from her mother's home. She offers her services as a guide and translator for 1 shilling (sp) per day.

Even if they refuse her offer to guide them around Paridon, Jenny is still perfectly willing to talk to the adventurers. She is friendly, interested in everything the PCs have to say and speaks with a charming accent.

If the PCs mention their strange encounter with the marikith, Jenny draws back in fear, putting one hand to her open mouth. She excitedly tells them about the 'shadow killers' and doppelgangers that have made Paridon their home.

What Jenny Knows

Read or paraphrase the following information to answer any question the heroes may have about marikith, doppelgangers or Bloody Jack. This information is typical of the rumor and misinformation that most people in Paridon take as fact. If the characters ask any other commoner in Paridon, they will receive similar answers.

"Well. It sounds to me like you saw a shadow killer. They're these horrible monsters what live in the sewers and only come out at night. People say that they're the spirits of evil people that come back to avenge themselves on people they knew during their lives. Others say they're monsters that kidnap people to boil them down for soup. I don't know what exactly they are, but you're the only people I know that have ever seen them with their own eyes.

"Doppelgangers are vicious monsters that live in Paridon. They try to lure you into dark alleys or back rooms, where they slit your throat as quick as can be. Then they change to look like you, and they're so good no one will ever know that it ain't. If I were you, I wouldn't go anywhere with people you don't know. You never know what they intend. Except me, of course. I know I'm not a doppelganger.

"Anyway, these doppelgangers make sport with us. Every thirteen years, a doppelganger goes out and kills six people at midnight. The other doppelgangers have got to try to stop it – because it's a game you see – but they generally don't try too hard. If the doppelganger kills the six people, it becomes king for the next thirteen years. We call the killer Bloody Jack, and he's been doing it for as long as anyone can remember. And he's due to start again tonight!"

If more information is needed, feel free to summarize Paridon's description from the **Ravenloft Campaign Setting**.

Although much of this is rumor and superstition, the PCs should get a reasonable idea of Paridon's situation (if they aren't familiar with it from *Hour of the Knife*). To illustrate her point, Jenny calls over a paperboy and buys a *Newbill*, which she haltingly reads to the PCs. (Give them the first *Newsbill* handout). Bloody Jack clearly terrifies Jenny. When a nearby clock starts striking 10:00, she almost leaps out of her skin.

With an uneasy smile, the girl suggests that the heroes find somewhere to stay for the night. She offers to take them to the boarding house where she lives – it's not far and relatively cheap.

Moving On

Regardless of whether the PCs go with Jenny or not, the next scene, *Waiting For Midnight* takes place at whatever boarding house they choose. Of course, without Jenny, finding a boarding house is far more difficult. However, if they want to do it alone, she tries to persuade them to meet her the next morning for a tour of the city.

Of course, the heroes may also want to leap into the investigation straight away – a difficult task, considering that there has been no new evidence for 13 years. If they go to a guard station, the constable on duty curtly tells them that they aren't permitted to give out any details to the public without the Chief Constable's permission. The constable gives them directions to the City Guard Headquarters, and tells them to see Inspector Wortle in the morning. No matter how insistent they are, the constable can't and won't change his mind, and may try to arrest them, suspecting them to be doppelgangers, if they become too insistent. Other avenues of investigation are even less helpful; no one will open their doors to anyone tonight.

If the adventurers decide to prowl the streets looking for Bloody Jack, they find nothing.

Waiting for Midnight

Inns no longer really exist in Paridon any more. The city abounds with taverns, where the harassed Paridoners go to relax, and a few restaurants have managed to survive the food shortages, but the only places for travelers to stay are boarding houses – places where Paridoners too poor to own their own homes can rent rooms by the week. Jenny is in just this situation; she and her father, Philip, stay in Mrs. Haversham's Boarding House, renting two adjoining rooms on the ground floor.

Jenny unlatches the battered green door and takes the PCs in to the sitting room, where they meet Mrs. Haversham herself. Mrs. Haversham is a thin, peevish woman, hardened by life as a poor woman in Paridon. She is in her late middle age, although she retains the vigor of someone a good deal younger. Her iron gray hair is always tied into a neat bun, her clothes are always immaculately cleaned and pressed, and she always wears a hat when outside. She is polite to her guests, especially when she doesn't like them; in fact, the less fond she is of her guests, the more icy and polite she becomes. No one has ever established what happened to Mr. Haversham. She refuses to discuss the matter. She is concerned only with running a respectable boarding house. As such, she minds her business, and expects her guests to do the same.

If the heroes asks for board, Mrs. Haversham counts off a number of conditions on her bony fingers before handing over the keys to some rooms on the top floor: each bed costs a shilling (sp) per night, or six for the week; breakfast is served from seven until ten in the common room; linen is changed once per week; tenants are to have no guests without permission; and the door is locked at 11:30 every night. She also refuses to let a man and a woman stay in the same room unless they can prove that they are married.

The heroes are given rooms with two beds each on the top floor of the boarding house. The rooms are dark but clean and relatively comfortable. The floorboards creak. Each room is equipped with a small coal stove

to keep out the fog, although coal costs an extra six pence (cp) per bucket load.

Rather alarmingly, screams of pain and curses can be heard through the floor in one room. Mrs. Haversham explains that one of tenants downstairs is having a baby. She considers it quite improper if anyone pries into this matter, particularly men.

If Jenny is present, she returns to her room after making sure the heroes are comfortable. As she goes, she warns them not to leave the boarding house or move around in groups of less than three, especially near midnight. That tonight is the night Bloody Jack is due to return is never far from anyone's mind.

Once Jenny and Mrs. Haversham have left, the PCs are free to do whatever they wish. If they are from medieval or more primitive cultures, the boarding house is a fascinating place. The curtains and bed linen are made of unusually regular woven cloth (constructed by machine looms) and the lanterns are supplied with oil from pipes inside the walls. The sounds from the room below continue.

By 10:30, almost all the native boarders have gathered in the common room, hoping for safety in numbers. The birthing room opens onto this room, allowing everyone to hear the muffled labor pains. If the characters join them, Jenny will introduce them to her father and the handful of other guests, who ask them endless questions about their travels. Like all Paridoners, the guests are polite listeners, but unwilling to give away few details about themselves. Unlike Mrs. Haversham, they are willing to discuss the birth in the next room.

The couple sharing the birthing room are named Henry and Lucy Barnett. They arrived about a week ago, when Lucy was already heavy with child. As luck would have it, Lucy went into labor a few hours ago. Henry left just before the heroes arrived to fetch a midwife; the poor man has been coming in and out of the birthing room all day, 'frantic with worry'. 'In fact, he should have been back some time ago,' adds a gossip meaningfully. If one of the PCs tries to enter the room, Mrs. Haversham will stop them. Delivery rooms are no place for outsiders, even doctors.

At about 11:00, a frenzied banging erupts from the front door. Mrs. Haversham starts from her chair and licks her lips nervously. After clearing her throat, she asks for someone to accompany her to the door. (If none of the heroes volunteer, Jenny goes). All the other tenants return to their pipes or knitting while keeping one eye studiously focused on the hall.

After a tense moment, Mrs. Haversham returns with a tall man and a well-dressed couple in their fifties. The younger man, Henry, strides over to his wife's room, noting 'She's in here, please,' and vanishes inside. The woman – a short, matronly woman – follows him. The older man takes a seat after giving his hat and cane to Mrs. Haversham.

The man is Dr. George Burton, a noted and very wealthy surgeon. He is obviously well off, and is dressed in fine, respectable clothes (quite at odds with

the poverty of his current surrounds). The doctor is portly and wears a thick handle bar moustache.

Dr. Burton accompanied his wife to protect her from Bloody Jack, but these shabby surroundings make him very uncomfortable. As such, he volunteers very little about himself other than the fact that his wife is an excellent midwife; she learnt her trade from his books on surgery. He does not give his name.

Overcome with anxiety, Henry pops in and out of the delivery room all evening. It is very bad manners for the heroes to try to look in, but if they do, they will see nothing unusual. The sounds of Lucy's strenuous labor continue right up to midnight.

As midnight approaches, everyone in the common room falls silent and begins staring fearfully around. When Mrs. Haversham's mantle clock does begin striking, the Paridoners give an audible sigh of relief. A minute or two later, the sounds of labor subside. Mrs. Burton appears and whispers to her husband that the baby was stillborn. Truly suspicious characters can look into the room – both Henry and Lucy are still alive and tenderly embracing on the bed. Lucy is sobbing helplessly.

The Burtons leave and the other tenants drift off to their rooms. Despite the sad event, everyone is greatly relieved that midnight has passed.

Behind the Scenes

Midnight passed and no one dead?

In reality, Henry and Lucy are Luda and Sorjan, the two doppelgangers assigned to watch Bloody Jack. The real Henry was a tradesman on the opposite side of Paridon that Jack killed a week ago. Luda then assumed the same form and snuck the golem into the boarding house. Jack has been hidden beneath the floorboards, without any need to eat, move or even breathe, for a week. All this was to lure out a victim – the doppelgangers were well aware that everyone would be on their guard.

At midnight, while 'Lucy' continued to mime childbirth, Jack rose up from the floor behind Mrs. Burton. 'Henry' held a pillow over the midwife's face while Jack savagely murdered her and 'Lucy' masked any sounds of struggle. Jack then cut open Mrs. Burton's head, ate her brain and absorbed her memories. Minutes later, the real Mrs. Burton's corpse was hidden under the floorboards and Jack left with Dr. Burton.

Meanwhile, Sodo has closed Paridon's borders. It is his habit to do so during the Blood Rite to stop his minions from stealing the *Fang of the Nosferatu* or to stop victims from escaping. Anyone who tries to leave Paridon over the next few days will find the Mists lead them straight back to the city. The border with Timor, however, remains open. Sodo is unable to prevent the marikith leaving the sewers.

THE SECOND DAY

There is a passion for hunting

deeply implanted in the human breast

—Charles Dickens,
Oliver Twist

DAY TWO

Lost in the Fog

When morning comes, the fog thins out a little. The sun remains a dull glow in the misty sky, but visibility increases to around a quarter of a mile. In the boarding house, breakfast is a single bread roll, a boiled egg and a little tea. If anyone complains, Mrs. Haversham curtly explains that it is a decent meal by Paridon's standards and if the adventurers don't want it, there are plenty of starving children who do.

During the meal, Henry and Lucy appear. Henry explains that his wife can't bear to stay any longer – their room holds too many painful memories for them. They pay what they owe, hail a hansom cab and leave. Mrs. Haversham, sympathetically clucking to herself, locks the door to their bedroom, refusing to let anyone in to investigate. Should the PCs take matters into their own hands and pick the lock (DC 20), Mrs. Haversham appears after only a few moments and confronts them angrily.

Once the heroes are ready to explore, Jenny appears (regardless of whether they wanted her to guide them or not). She is willing to take them anywhere they want to go and suggests a few of Paridon's attractions: the Rhastik bridge, the Clock Tower, the Houses of Parliament, the factories (complete with steam powered looms), the markets (which are full of merchants complaining about being unable to leave the city), the *Newsbill* offices and the Temple of the Divine Form. Although she has never done it before Jenny is a relatively proficient tour guide and able to bring to mind a few interesting facts about each place she takes them.

Moving On

While touring the city is relatively interesting for the PCs, it is probably less so for the players themselves and their minds may begin to wander. If they ask about the strange shape they saw in the alley last night, Jenny takes them to the *Newsbill* offices; go to *Questions, Questions*. If they ask about doppelgangers, she takes them to the Temple of the Divine Form (*A Few Answers*).

Questions, Questions

The *Newsbill* offices are housed in a large warehouse in the West End. A constant stream of people come to and from the building, collecting papers for sale, reporting news, or simply staring in fascination at the interior. Inside, a secretary politely but briskly greets the PCs and asks how she can help them. If they simply want to look at the press or buy a *Newsbill*, she remains distant; she won't allow them into the print room. A dozen bulky men in bowler hats work within earshot to enforce this rule if necessary.

If, however, the PCs mention their encounter with the marikith the night before, her whole manner changes.

As soon as the words are past your lips, the secretary's face slackens with surprised delight. With a hurried, "Would you wait a moment please?" she almost runs over to the door to the print shop. In a most unladylike manner, she opens the door and shouts, "Jenkins! Run up and get Mr. Thompson, would ya? Tell 'im there's some folk down 'ere who 'ave seen a shadow killer!"

She makes her way more sedately back to her desk, smiling at you all the way – a complete change from the uninterested professional of a few moments ago. "Mr. Thompson, our chief reporter, will be down to see you in just a moment."

A second later, a heavyset man bursts through the door. He strides over to you and enfolds your hand in a crushing grip.

"Thompson, William Thompson. Pleased to meet you. I understand you've got a news item for us? Would you like to step into my office? Cigar? Brandy?" He begins ushering you towards the doorway, barraging you with questions and comments. You are almost too confused by the onslaught to even think of resisting.

William Thompson is a large man, whose smiling round face and friendly manner disguise the heart of a businessman and a mind as sharp as a dagger. He is completely amoral and will do literally anything for a story and the money it brings. Now that he knows the PCs have some information for him, he won't leave them alone until they share it. If the characters will give him the details of their encounter with the marikith – what it looked like, where it was, what it did – he offers them all a free tour of the print shop and copies of today's *Newsbill* if they'll show him where it happened. In fact, the ardor with which he tries to lure them into a secluded back alley should start alarm bells

in the players' heads. Thompson is just too eager to make friends to be genuine. Observant characters may occasionally glimpse a cold, hard look in his eyes as he listens to them. Try to make the PCs uneasy without actually provoking them to act on their suspicions. Thompson isn't a doppelganger, but there should be some doubt about it.

What Thompson Knows

"As far as I know, and I will admit I don't know much, doppelgangers are shapeshifting monsters that are jealous of humanity's achievements. As such, they try to kill those who have achieved the most and assume their lives. Most doppelgangers only change form when they are exposed or have exhausted the resources of their current role. They are frighteningly intelligent and are almost indistinguishable from the humans they replace. More frightening still, they live in Paridon; an unknown number of the aristocracy, including perhaps some members of the City Council, has been replaced. That is where we come in. By scrutinizing the lives of the aristocracy and reporting scandal, the *Newsbill* is performing a valuable public service and helping to expose doppelgangers."

Thompson is far too concerned with money to really care about the rationale behind the Bloody Jack murders. The murders help to sell papers; beyond that, it doesn't matter why they happen. As long as he doesn't fall victim to Bloody Jack himself, the doppelgangers can go on killing people every thirteen years until the reporter retires.

However, Thompson is a devout believer in the marikith. The sight of one of its creatures and its glowing red eyes made a profound impact upon the reporter.

"I saw one of the shadow killers a few years ago. Of course, I don't like calling them shadow killers – they're much better than that title implies, and there's no concrete evidence they've ever killed anyone. I don't believe that they're dangerous. They only seem frightening because they're so different to us. They're alien beings, you see, living in our sewers temporarily. If we could communicate, I think both the creatures and us would have much to learn from each other. They may even be able to wipe out the doppelgangers."

Needless to say, this is willfully ignoring many of the facts about marikiths, but Thompson is blinded by his affection for them.

The *Newsbill* also keeps a huge library of back issues, dating back thirteen years to the last Bloody Jack murder cycle. If the PCs ask, they can find the names of the previous cycle's victims, and delicate hints at how they were killed. Paraphrase the most recent part of the *Wortle's Register* handout.

If the PCs agree to show Thompson the alley, Jenny leads them back to Ream Street and from there it is a simple matter to find the grocer and the alley. On the way, they are stopped by a guardsman, who politely greets Thompson by name and asks, "Are these the gents what saw them shadow killers?" If

anyone acts surprised that the guard has learned of the event, the man taps his nose and points out that the *Newsbill* isn't the only place with eyes and ears. He asks to accompany them as a representative of the guard.

The alley is much the same as the night before, except that the crates have been removed. No trace of the marikith can be found unless someone thinks to examine the drainpipe. If the PCs chased the marikith into the drain, the faint scent of sewage can be detected in the pipe. Considering that the pipe carries only rainwater, this is quite unusual.

Thompson and the guardsman examine every inch of the alley and get the heroes to describe and reenact everything that they did. Jenny watches with wide eyes. The PCs may notice that the guardsman is not very efficient; Thompson seems far more experienced at combing a scene, and the guardsman spends a lot of time just listening to the reporter and the PCs.

Once Thompson and the guardsman have gone over the scene in exhaustive detail, they thank the heroes and hurry away. Thompson heads back to the print shop in the West End, while the guardsman heads north to Ream Street, where any pursuers are lost in the crowd.

Moving On

The PCs can either return to exploring Paridon in *Lost in the Fog* and *A Few Answers*, or return to the boarding house in *A Brush With the Law*.

A Few Answers

If the PCs start asking about doppelgangers, they will be directed to the Temple of the Divine Form. The priests of the Divinity of Mankind are well known as Paridon's experts on the esoteric and the unusual. In fact, rumors about the priests' inquiries into things that are better left undiscovered and bizarre alchemical rituals abound. Doppelgangers obviously fall under this purview. With the help of the Divinity of Mankind, the PCs will be able to separate fact about the shapeshifters from rumor.

Once at the temple, a priest will grudgingly take them to the wing housing the Philosophy of Humanity, Paridon's true experts on doppelgangers. The priest mutters all the way about 'crackpots' and their 'dangerous blasphemy'. Before she goes, the priest will ask the PCs to remember that the rest of the church does not accept the views of this sect.

The heroes are introduced to Edward Chaswick, a senior member of the Philosophy of Humanity. Characters who played *Hour of the Knife* may well recognize Edward, who, after a moment, will recognize them in return. (If Edward was killed, replace him with a priest named Percy Harvard). Edward is more than willing to talk about shapechangers and even knows a little about the *Fang of the Nosferatu*. However, factual though his dissertations are, they are interjected with comments

about ‘saving the doppelgangers’ and other tidbits of dogma.

What Edward Knows

‘Doppelgangers are hairless, sexless humanoids with oily gray skin and abnormally long arms. Their ears are pointed (perhaps suggesting kinship with elves) and their mouth unusually large. They have sharp, needle-like teeth and are naturally carnivorous. They reproduce by interbreeding with humans, indicating their desire and ability to be saved. They naturally organize themselves into extended family groups or clans.

‘They have a remarkable and unique ability to change shape and can assume the form of any humanoid between about three feet and seven feet tall. They can even change the appearance of their possessions to match their new form, although the basic composition of the item remains the same. By this I mean that a doppelganger would be able to make a walking stick look like a wooden boat or a sword, or even a stylus, but couldn’t disguise the fact that the sword was made of wood.

‘Doppelgangers seem to be able to read minds, although dissections haven’t revealed which part of the brain is responsible for that ability. This magical ability, as well as their immunity to charm spells, lends further weight to the theory that they are a sub-race of elves, which are well known as magical creatures.

‘The doppelgangers of Paridon seem to worship a god of transience, called Sodo, who is said to never wear the same form from one second to the next. Every thirteen years they reassert their devotion to him by ritualistically murdering one person at midnight for six days with a sacred knife. This blade is carved to resemble the hissing face of a vampire, with the blade as its tongue. The hilt is bound in doppelganger hide. Although this habit is of course distressing, the doppelgangers’ devotion to their god shows that they possess a spiritual nature and the ability to remain faithful to that nature. These are positive features – only races with some kinship to humanity understand spiritualism. Thus, doppelgangers are not animals that are unusually good at mimicking their prey. They are sentient beings that can be brought to the enlightened state of humanity.’

Edward doesn’t know anything about the marikith. He believes that the reports of ‘shadow killers’ in the *Newsbill* are simply confused reports about doppelgangers.

Moving On

Once the heroes are bored with talking to Edward, they can return to exploring Paridon (*Lost in the Fog* and *Questions, Questions*) or can return to the boarding house. If they have been telling people about their encounter with the marikith, they find Inspector Wortle waiting for them (go to *A Brush With the Law*).

A Brush With the Law

When the PCs return to the boarding house, they find Mrs. Haversham waiting for them. Through pursed lips, the woman informs the adventurers that the guard is here to see them. She leads them into the common room.

Sitting uncomfortably in one of Mrs. Haversham’s threadbare armchairs is a large, run-down looking man nursing a cup of tea. The man is obviously used to drinking things that are stronger than tea: his broken nose and cheeks are cherry red with the telltale signs of a heavy drinker. Thick purple rings under his bloodshot eyes suggest he hasn’t slept well in weeks. If he has slept, he obviously did so in his clothes. He smiles mechanically at you when you come in, and puts the cup on a side table.

He is flanked by two blue-uniformed men with the unmistakable bearing of guardsmen.

Alternately, this event could occur if the PCs decide to visit the city guard themselves, to offer their services or to learn more about the situation. If so, they find Wortle drinking a cup of tea behind a huge desk, barely visible under mounds of paperwork.

The chief constable introduces himself as Inspector James Wortle. Despite his appearance, he is a good guardsman and determined to see Bloody Jack stopped. He is also prepared to trust the heroes, following the ‘only trust strangers’ mentality common in Paridon.

The Inspector politely asks the PCs about the shadow killer they saw. A guardsman saw them leaving the *Newsbill* offices with William Thompson. Knowing Thompson’s obsession with the marikith, it was not hard to work out what had happened. If they haven’t met Thompson, the guard heard that Jenny had been bragging about her friends who saw the shadow killer. If the PCs say that they’ve already told the guard everything they know, read the following.

As soon as the words are past your lips, the whole demeanor of the three guards changes. The two uniformed constables exchange meaningful glances behind Wortle’s back. The Inspector himself stiffens and gruffly hisses, “No one has reported anything like this before, and if one of my officers had heard about it, I would have heard about it by now. The creature you met must have been a doppelganger.” Wortle’s face twists with disgust and anger.

Wortle carefully goes through the encounter once more. He does not proffer any theories on the doppelgangers or the marikith, saying that the guard are not in the habit of creating theories without having all the information at their disposal. Since both those creatures are largely unknown, Wortle tries to avoid any preconceived notions about their abilities or

motives. If pressed, he will admit that he is sure that both races are utterly evil and mean no good for humanity.

He does, however, have full notes on the past murders, including the victim's names and how they were killed. Give the PCs the *Wortle's Register* handout.

Wortle pulls a handful of paper from one of his pockets and hands it to you. The pages are divided into three columns. The first gives a date, the second lists a series of names, and last column is filled with details of how they were killed.

"Sadly," he says as you scan the list with a growing sense of horror and revulsion, "we only created the office of city coroner when the guard was reformed, about twelve years ago, so more detailed records of the murders are a little scarce. The bodies used to be examined by a mortician employed by the church, but he died about six years back."

Once he has finished questioning the heroes, Wortle thanks them for their time and shambles out. This encounter is intended primarily to introduce the PCs to the Inspector, who is an important character in later scenes and may even be used as a temporary PC if one of the original PCs are killed.

Moving On

If the PCs decide to stay inside at night, they are perfectly safe until morning. If they go looking for Bloody Jack in *On Patrol*, of course, they find more than they bargained for.

NIGHT TWO

On Patrol

With no sign of Jack, the people of Paridon are feeling a little more secure and the city shows more signs of life tonight. Of course, it is still far from normal. Lamplighters ply their trade in the main thoroughfares, but are too afraid to enter the side streets, leaving them shrouded in darkness. Tension is thick in the air; shopkeepers eye their customers carefully, and even the suggestion of a private meeting is met with sudden, violent fright. Paridoners have learned to be cautious when it comes to doppelgangers.

If the PCs want to explore the city by night they are free to do so, although Jenny and Mrs. Haversham both advise against it. Neither of them will try to stop them, but without Jenny to act as translator communicating with the Paridoners may be quite difficult.

As the heroes move through the foggy streets, one of them notices soft footsteps following them. If they do nothing about it, the stalker follows them for some time, staying at a safe distance. The footsteps are light

and quick, stopping whenever the heroes do. Through the lantern-lit fog, the characters may catch a glimpse of a bulbous-headed figure stealing along behind them. The figure follows them tenaciously, never allowing them to see more than a silhouette or a flash of white.

When the PCs tire of their stalker, they can easily ambush it – or her, as it turns out. The stalker is Jenny, driven from the safety of the boarding house by curiosity. If anyone should leap out at her, Jenny screams piercingly and bursts into tears. When she calms down, she explains that she simply wanted to follow the PCs and see what an adventurer's life was like. She reminds them that her mother was an adventurer, and since meeting the heroes, she has felt great kinship with her. She didn't mean any harm.

Assuming she isn't mistaken for a doppelganger and killed, Jenny can either accompany the PCs for the rest of the night or be escorted back to the boarding house. She will go by herself only if the PC's reacted violent; no matter how much the adventurers frightened her, she would prefer to stay with them rather than travel Paridon alone.

The purpose of this encounter is simply to create a little tension and give the heroes some action. It also establishes that Jenny is too curious for her own good – a point that will become important later on.

Moving On

If the heroes are still in the streets as midnight approaches, go to *The Shadow Killers*. If they take Jenny home and decide to stay there, the night passes uneventfully.

The Shadow Killers

Just before midnight, the PCs see a group of three women (of the kind that walk the night seeking the company of lonely gentlemen), standing on a yellow-lit street corner. A rough looking man stands nearby, arguing furiously with them. Then, just as the nearby clock tower starts chiming twelve, the streetwalkers suddenly draw some daggers and start threatening the ruffian!

With the heroes unable to speak Zherisian, it is quite likely that they will misinterpret the situation, possibly mistaking the streetwalkers for Bloody Jack or doppelgangers. In fact, the girls are simply ensuring that they aren't Jack's victims. One of them tells the ruffian (and the PCs if they interfere aggressively – they are all very much on edge) that 'Unless ya wants to get y'self cut, ya should keep ya distance till the clock's done striking.' Even if the heroes don't interfere, they'll probably get a knife pointed in their direction and a curt 'What are you starin' at?'

If the PCs can't speak Zherisian, a Sense Motive check (DC 10) and a moment's thought will allow them to interpret the situation correctly. It is clear the women are fending the man off, not attacking him. If the PCs attack without taking the time to analyze the

situation, the ruffian flees. The streetwalkers attack with their daggers for one round then try to escape.

In an alley nearby, a group of marikith is waiting. As soon as either the clock finishes striking or when the streetwalkers turn to flee, the monsters leap from the refuse where they were hiding and attack. The PCs' first warning is the glowing red eyes that suddenly appear in the dark alley, then they are surrounded by the stench of sewage and darting black bodies.

The marikith try to kidnap as many people as possible, grappling them and dragging them towards an open manhole near their hiding places (about thirty feet from the streetwalkers' corner). When the PCs defend themselves, the marikith will focus on them and start using more lethal tactics.

Marikith Hunter (5): CR 2; Medium-sized aberration; HD 3d8+3; hp 16; Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 17 (+4 Dex, +3 natural); Atk 2 claws +5 melee (1d4+3), bite +0 melee (2d4+3); SA Voice mimicry; SQ Compression, darkvision 120 ft, immunities, light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 19, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 5.

Skills and Feats: Escape Artist +16, Hide +12, Listen +6, Move Silently +12, Spot +4; Improved Initiative.

Scarlet Women (3): Female human Com1; CR 1/3; Medium-size humanoid; HD 1d4; hp 3; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (Dex); Atk +0 melee (1d3 subdual, unarmed strike); AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 15. Height: 5'8"

Skills and Feats: Innuendo +1, Perform (seduction) +4, Sense Motive +3; Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (sense motive)

The PCs should defeat the marikith, which flee after a third of their number are killed. The monsters try to take their fallen with them but will leave dead marikith behind if they're squarely routed. With luck, the PCs may even see them squeezing into narrow drains to escape (which explains how the marikith 'vanished' on Night One). Heroes brave enough to follow the marikith into the sewers find the tunnels full of paralytic vapor – the Hive Queen has closed Timor's border. Anyone who is kidnapped is dragged down to the Hive Queen's lair and sealed into the putrescent island.

Constables arrive within a few minutes of the end of the fight, led by Inspector Wortle. The Inspector's first priority is to ensure that everyone present is unharmed and to get statements from them all. The other guardsmen surround the marikith corpses like flies. They are repulsed and entranced by the bodies in equal measure, and when they talk, their voices are hushed with reverence. The players should understand that the capture of a marikith is of huge significance to

these people; after all, it is the first concrete evidence they have that the shadow killers really exist.

After they have been questioned, the heroes are free to go. (Inspector Wortle is prepared to ignore any attack on the streetwalkers in return for the marikith corpses). Impressed by their skill, he even offers to deputize them for the duration of the Bloody Jack murder cycle. If they want to examine the corpses or watch the dissection, he invites them to attend the coroner's office the next day. Otherwise, he recommends they go home and get some sleep. After a few minutes, the coroner's cart arrives and removes the bodies under heavy supervision from the guards.

Moving On

The adventurers will have little to do for the rest of the night. Insistent banging on the door to the boarding house rouses Mrs. Haversham, who steadfastly refuses to unlock the door. Only magical compulsion or a successful Bluff check (DC 25) will convince her to do so. It is a far simpler matter to climb the wall and enter through the bedroom windows (Open Locks or Disable Device DC 7).

Behind the Scenes

Bloody Jack spends most of the day posing as Mrs. Burton. During the course of the day, she gives two of the Burtons' servants the night off. Sorjan and Luda take their places.

Jack kills Dr. Burton at midnight, while the doppelgangers keep the other two servants busy in the kitchen. The doctor tries to defend himself with a poker, but the golem overpowers him, kills him and devours his brain. Sorjan and Luda hide his body in the coal shed – but are seen by one of the servants, who doesn't realize what is happening but also doesn't let the other 'servants' see him.

The two real servants, now somewhat drunk, return home from the pub sometime after midnight, none the wiser.

THE THIRD DAY

*She was there, lifeless and inanimate,
thrown across the bed, her head hanging
down
and her pale and distorted features half
covered by her hair.
Everywhere I turn I see the same figure
her bloodless arms and relaxed form
flung
by the murderer on its bridal bier*

—Mary Shelley,
Frankenstein

DAY THREE

A Grisly Discovery

The PCs awake to find a strange smell in their bedrooms. The smell is quite faint but smells a little like sewage or bad meat. The smell is considerably stronger downstairs, but seems to have no real source. Mrs. Haversham apologizes for it, blaming the privy, and states she will have it fixed that afternoon. She is distinctly frosty this morning if the PCs broke into their rooms after hours. A character with the Scent ability, or anyone who makes a Wisdom check (DC 20) is able to tell that the smell is actually coming from Henry and Lucy's room, not the lavatory.

If the PCs don't find the true source of the stench, the smell worsens through the day. (The PCs can spend the morning *Visiting the Coroner* or *Exploring the Sewers*, to return at noon and locate the smell). By noon, it is obviously coming from Henry and Lucy's room. Mrs. Haversham will eagerly let the heroes in if they will get rid of the smell – it's bad for business.

The smell is coming from some loose floorboards in the center of the room. When the boards are pulled

up, a cloud of flies and the stench of decay fills the room. The bloated body of the midwife stares up at you with milky eyes. Although you can't be sure, it looks as though the back of her head has been cut away

Mrs. Haversham gives a piercing scream and faints dead away.

Mrs. Burton was obviously killed by a number of knife wounds. The back of her skull has been cut away and the brain removed (although there is no evidence to say that the brain has been eaten; this clue isn't discovered until Dr. Burton's body is found). Very little blood remains. More detailed investigation (perhaps with the help of the coroner, Dr. Cream) shows that the angle of the knife wounds are very slight, indicating they were caused by quite a tall man (as Henry was). Her mouth holds a few scraps of blue cloth, matching one of the cushions, and marks on the back of her neck show where Luda held her hard enough to bruise. Her left shoulder, where Jack held her while he stabbed, has been completely crushed, indicating the murderer had phenomenal strength. The corpse seems to be about one or two days old; it is her eyes and evacuated bowels that can be smelled, not her flesh, which hasn't begun rotting yet. A successful Search check (DC 30) reveals a few strands of Henry's hair under some dust in the hole; strangely, from the way the dust has fallen onto the hair, they seem to have been there for more than a week.

As soon as she recovers, Mrs. Haversham fetches a guardsman. The guard arrive in force, study the scene, question everyone present and take the body away to the coroner's office. The constables (and probably the PCs if they've been deputized; if they haven't, now is the time to do so) disperse to find Henry and Lucy and the murdered woman's doppelganger. Unfortunately, no one knows who she is – neither she nor her husband ever gave their names. Fortunately, they do know that she was a midwife and the heroes may remember that her husband was a doctor. As there aren't that many midwives in Paridon, this is a useful clue.

Have any PCs trying to identify the dead woman make a Gather Information check (DC 20). They get a +4 bonus if they remember that her husband was a doctor. If the check is successful, after several hours of legwork – finding and questioning midwives, most of whom know only one or two others – the PCs eventually arrive at the Burton's townhouse. If the check fails, they must wait until the guard identify her, just before nightfall. Of course, any attempt to find Henry and Lucy is totally fruitless.

The Burton Townhouse

Unless the PCs have official badges or are accompanied by guardsmen, the servants won't let them into the townhouse's grounds. They are too paranoid about doppelgangers to trust strangers and are worried about being held responsible for any damage that might be done while the owners are away. However, once the PCs have proved that they have legal backing, the servants are perfectly willing to help them. They say that Mrs. Burton hasn't been seen at all today. Dr. Burton is currently lecturing at the university. The news of Mrs. Burton's death comes as a shock to all four of them, particularly since they saw her yesterday, a day after she supposedly died, and she seemed perfectly normal. In fact, one says sadly, it was her habit to clean the silverware herself and the imposter did that yesterday. If it was a doppelganger, it knew Mrs. Burton intimately.

However, when asked about their movements, the four servants' accounts rapidly begin to conflict. Two of the servants say they had been given the night off by Mrs. Burton and were at the Builder's Arm (a local pub) from nightfall to nearly 1 a.m. The others say all four servants spent the evening playing cards in the kitchen.

At that moment, the butler suddenly remembers seeing the two servants lugging something through the house last night at midnight. He had no idea what they were carrying – it must have been Mrs. Burton's body – and no idea where they took it. He takes one of the PCs aside and informs them of his suspicions. If the PCs arrived before the rest of the guard and sent someone to collect the rest of the guard, they arrive now. Inspector Wortle takes over the investigation, complimenting the PCs on their clear thinking and zeal.

Inspector Wortle organizes a search of the house. The PCs are asked to search the study on the first floor of the town house. A successful Search check (DC 10) reveals the poker, lying in the ashes of the fire grate and bent slightly out of shape (as though it was hurled with great force into the grate and then left where it fell) and a spot of blood on the hearth. Another officer finds some bloody bed sheets hidden in main bedroom. These are the sheets Sorjan and Luda used to wrap Dr. Burton's body in when they were dragging it through the house.

Suddenly, the house is filled with cries and cheers from downstairs, where they find a young officer proudly cradling the *Fang of the Nosferatu*. The officer says he found it while searching the back garden, having just finished searching the coal shed, and presumes that it was thrown from one of the windows on the top floor. Inspector Wortle claps the man on the shoulder and orders the arrest of Dr. Burton.

The guard rush to the university to arrest the doctor. Naturally, the PCs may accompany them. They find Dr. Burton in the middle of a medical lecture, scalpel in hand, but he acts the gentleman and

surrenders peacefully. The other doctors protest his innocence – Burton had been explaining a remarkable new surgical technique that he had pioneered. No doppelganger could possibly give the lecture without making obvious mistakes. As Burton is dragged out, the doctors assure him they'll see the matter rectified.

Dr. Burton is taken back to the guard station, past a gauntlet of *Newsbill* reporters and stunned bystanders and put into a cell.

Moving On

Presumably the PCs will want to go back to the jail with the guard and see the matter through to the end. In this case, go on to *Victory Undone*. They may, however, decide that it is time to visit Dr. Cream at the coroner's office (*Visiting the Coroner*).

Behind the Scenes

The PCs' arrival at the Burton townhouse quickly draws the attention of Bloody Jack's two doppelganger assistants, who decide that something must be done to avert suspicion. Sorjan takes on the appearance of a guardsman and joins in the search of the house. He claims to have searched the coal shed to stop anyone finding Dr. Burton's body, and makes a scrap of rusty metal look like the *Fang of the Nosferatu* with his innate magical abilities. Luda runs to the university to warn Jack what to expect. On the way back, he stops to tell William Thompson that Bloody Jack has been arrested, then he assumes the form of a guardsman and joins Wortle's procession to arrest Burton.

The doppelgangers plan to 'frame' Jack to distract the guard. After Dr. Burton has been arrested (as they know he inevitably will be), one will take on his appearance while the other spirits the golem away. Then, 'Dr. Burton' will rest comfortably in his cell while Jack murders someone else. This will make it obvious that the guard have imprisoned the wrong man and the doppelganger will be released. Additionally, it will be a lot easier to find a victim if the *Newsbill* prints that Bloody Jack has been arrested.

Of course, the real Dr. Burton's corpse is still hidden in the coal shed of his townhouse, which is securely locked (the door has hardness 5, 10 hp, break DC 15, Open Locks DC 20). Like his wife, Dr. Burton was killed by multiple knife wounds, the steep angle of which indicates his attacker was quite short (Mrs. Burton was a little over 5' tall). The corpse has been drained of blood, the back of the head removed and the brain devoured – human teeth marks can be seen gouged into the skull bones. Both the elbow and the shoulder of his right arm have been dislocated; when he tried to defend himself with a poker, Jack knocked it out of his hand, destroying his arm in the process.

In the coal next to Dr. Burton's body is a crumbled piece of paper bearing the official arms of the Paridon City Guard. The imprint of a few words can be made out; careful examination reveals they are written in Darkonese. Luda stole the page from the

coroner's office, which uses the same official letterhead as the Guard, in case he needed to use paper of some kind for a disguise. It fell out of his pocket when he disposed of Dr. Burton's body.

Exploring the Sewers

After their confrontation with the shadow killers last night, the PCs may be eager to investigate the sewers personally. Any native Paridonian will try to talk them out of this plan, calling upon years of urban legends and rumor to convince them how dangerous the sewers can be. Jenny's eyes widen with terror, and she begs the PCs not to go; Edward Chaswick frowns in consternation, explaining that the sewers are the heart of the doppelganger empire and they will resent any intrusion into their domain. Even Wortle is concerned; he sent a squad of ten guards into the sewers as soon as the mist cleared from the tunnels. Less than a minute later, as the *Newsbill's* headlines shout, the squad was massacred.

If the adventurers remain adamant, refer to the *Timor* section of this adventure (p. 9). Like any trip into Timor, this is a nightmarish journey through a maze of filth and loathsome, alien life. However, this time they are not alone with the marikith.

The marikith have been kidnapping doppelgangers and jackalweres from the surface for many years, using them to bolster the marikith's numbers when the surface dwellers' evil natures cause them to begin transforming into marikith hunters. By coincidence, one of these captive has managed to escape from the depths of Timor and find their way to the tunnels just under the surface.

The doppelganger escapee detects the thoughts of the approaching PCs, and transforms itself into the form of one of the kidnapped streetwalkers from the night before. (If none of the prostitutes were kidnapped, the doppelganger assumes the form of a teenage boy). It then dashes up the sewer to the PCs, throws itself into their arms and begs to be taken to the surface. A Sense Motive check (DC 5) reveals that the escapee is speaking truthfully; the "streetwalker" really is terrified of being trapped in Timor. If the PCs are hostile, the doppelganger tries to flee.

Suddenly, three pairs of glowing red eyes appear in the darkness where the doppelganger appeared. They stare unblinkingly at the PCs for a long moment, while the doppelganger stands frozen in horror. Then, the eyes wink out. The doppelganger screams, "They're coming to take me back! Please, please you must help me!" and falls on the nearest PC, sobbing in terror and pummeling futilely at their chest. Hopefully, the pitiful scene is enough to convince the adventurers to return to the surface. If not, ten minutes later, a pack of six marikith appear to try to kidnap the heroes and the escaped doppelganger, who flees as soon as the PCs engage the marikith. If the PCs are untroubled by only six marikith, another six appears just after the fight is ended. Do everything you can to convince the

players to leave the sewers and return to the main adventure.

Marikith Hunter (3 or 6): CR 2; Medium-sized aberration; HD 3d8+3; hp 16; Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 17 (+4 Dex, +3 natural); Atk 2 claws +5 melee (1d4+3), bite +0 melee (2d4+3); SA Voice mimicry; SQ Compression, darkvision 120 ft, immunities, light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 19, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 5.

Skills and Feats: Escape Artist +16, Hide +12, Listen +6, Move Silently +12, Spot +4; Improved Initiative.

Victory Undone

About an hour after Dr. Burton is arrested, a magistrate, the Honorable James Montague Rhodes, arrives at the guard headquarters. Rhodes is a member of the City Council, a friend and patient of Dr. Burton and he is absolutely furious. He refuses to believe that his friend could possibly be the Bloody Jack killer.

"Wortle!" comes an angry shout from the front office. A second later, a tall man, obviously wealthy, thunders through the doorway. His face is flushed a crimson so deep it is nearly purple. Without removing his hat or gloves, the man strides up to Wortle and angrily throws a special late edition of the *Newsbill* at his feet.

"What is the meaning of your arrest of Dr. Burton?" he bellows into the Inspector's face. "I return from a session with the City Council about the Bloody Jack problem, only to find this- this filth," he prods the newspaper violently, "trumpeting slander to the world. I will have you know that Dr. Burton is a close friend of mine and a well-respected doctor. The idea that he is a murderer is preposterous; he must have been framed! I demand to speak with him at once, so that we can prepare a defense against this ridiculous accusation!"

This will probably alarm the PCs, particularly as they have no idea who this man is. Even if they don't act, Wortle says he can't allow anyone to be left alone with Burton. A constable (actually Luda the doppelganger) volunteers to watch them. Wortle then chooses another constable to watch him. Using the irrefutable logic that anyone who handed over the *Fang of the Nosferatu* cannot be a doppelganger, Marbrick chooses Sorjan. Naturally, Wortle asks him to hand over the *Fang* first. Sorjan balks, knowing what will happen if separated from the false *Fang*.

Everyone in the room falls silent. Wortle's face flushes purple, and veins stand out in his forehead. The Inspector draws a pistol, points it at Sorjan's head and almost screams for him to hand over the knife. This insubordination is close to the final straw for Wortle's shaky hold on sanity. He hasn't slept in days and he is

convinced that the doppelgangers are going to try to let Bloody Jack, the *Fang* or the marikith corpse slip through his fingers. He's about to crack, and therefore completely overreacts to Sorjan's defiance. The PCs may be left wondering if *Wortle* is the doppelganger.

After a tense moment, Sorjan relents and hands over the *Fang*, pretending to be alarmed by the suspicion. He doesn't have to pretend to be afraid of the pistol. Wortle immediately grabs it, ducks into the armory and locks the door behind him. Rhodes and his escort go into the cells, also closing the door. Sorjan mutters aloud about Wortle's breakdown the whole time. If the PCs want to keep an eye on both suspects, they'll have to split up. If they burst into the armory, Wortle may well shoot them, while Rhodes will not be pleased at any further intrusion.

After only a second, Wortle exclaims 'Bloody Hell!' loud enough to be heard throughout the station and bolts back into the room. In one hand he clutches the false *Fang* which, now separated from Sorjan, quickly reverts into a useless piece of scrap metal. In the other he holds his pistol, which he waves maniacally, accusing everyone of being in league with the doppelgangers. The PCs must somehow calm Wortle sufficiently to allow them to go after the real doppelgangers. If anyone makes a sudden or threatening move, Wortle impulsively shoots them.

Meanwhile, the doppelgangers waste no time. As soon as they hear Wortle shout, one bolts the heavy iron door (break DC 28, Open Locks DC 33). The other throws Rhodes up against the bars to Jack's cell and holds him there while the golem breaks his neck. He then lets Bloody Jack out of its cell so it can eat the magistrate's brain. This takes one full minute after Wortle shouts. The pair then escape through the cell block exit that leads to the morgue, leaving Sorjan to delay the guard.

When the PCs finally burst in, they find a guardsman lying in a pool of blood next to Rhodes' mutilated body. If given a chance to explain, he claims that a doppelganger posing as a guardsman attacked him, then killed Rhodes and freed Dr. Burton while he was dazed. Of course, the PCs are unlikely to be fooled and will probably hack Sorjan to pieces. When he is killed, the doppelganger shifts from the form of a guardsman to one of the Burton's servants to Henry, finally stopping in its natural form. Its feet are covered in soot. The guardsman's blue uniform melts into voluminous but incredibly fine clothing.

In the doppelganger's pockets, investigators will find an amazing collection of trash – scraps of paper and cloth, pieces of metal and wood, even a fluff-covered pastry. Most important, however, is a small brass key, which any of the Burton's servants will identify as the key to the coal shed. Sorjan also has an intricately carved brooch, shaped like an insect, set over its heart.

Moving On

If the heroes pursue Luda and Bloody Jack, they find themselves in the coroner's morgue. Dr. Cream looks up in irritation from one of the examination benches, complaining about being interrupted again. The murderers have escaped onto the street, leaving no clues behind them. After a while, Rhodes and Sorjan are brought in and examined.

Wortle is sent home to rest. On Day Four, he is summoned to the City Council and officially removed from duties. His assistant, the pleasant but less-than-competent Inspector Francine Maxwell, is made Acting Chief Constable. She is well aware of her limitations and appeals to the PCs for help at every opportunity. If one of the PCs are killed, Wortle may turn up the next day, sober and determined, asking to help the PCs bring Jack to justice.

The PCs can either continue their conversation with Dr. Cream in *Visiting the Coroner*, start looking for Rhodes immediately in *Hunting the Magistrate*, or return to the Burton's townhouse to explore the coal shed. See *Behind the Scenes* above.

Visiting the Coroner

The coroner's office and morgue is a foreboding stone building adjoining the guard station. No paint or decorative façade disturbs its austere, soot-covered stonework. It is a bleak and gray monument to the study of death, where shamed or disturbed doctors are spend their time trying to wrest secrets from corpses. Needless to say, anyone who actually chooses to work here is certain to acquire a macabre reputation.

Dr. Thomas Cream is widely recognized as a brilliant, although unsettling, doctor, and his service to the Guard has been priceless. He has only filled the position for two years, but in that time he has managed to advance Paridon's knowledge of pathology immensely. When people comment on them at all, his ghoulish humor and strange mannerisms are credited to his foreign upbringing. Most of the time, they are ignored in deference to his exceptional work.

In reality, Dr. Cream is Emil Bollenbach, a mad scientist dedicated to creating the perfect golem. The Zherisians know nothing of his true history, but anyone who has met him before will undoubtedly recognize him despite his dyed hair and adoption of a Zherisian name – his facial tick and morbid humor make him a hard man to forget. However, if they accuse him of any wrongdoing, he will violently berate them, claiming that he fought evil at the side of the great Rudolph van Richten. He is able to give copious details about the golems he helped destroy. If presented with details of his more recent, less honorable deeds, he claims that he has been of great use to the Zherisian guards (which is true) and has left his obsessions behind (certainly not true). He came to Paridon to try to turn over a new leaf and make amends for what some have called his "past crimes", and given his service to the people of this city, he needn't listen to any slanderous accusations.

Depending on how late in the day the heroes visit the morgue, ‘Dr. Cream’ could be working on the corpse of the marikith, Mrs. Burton, or even Dr. Burton, Montague Rhodes, or Sorjan. He is more than happy to explain his procedures and point out any clues that the heroes might have missed. As he does so, Dr. Cream leaps from bench to bench, fondling the instruments of his trade tenderly, and telling ghoulish jokes to or about his charges. The flickering lanterns catch his distorted face, making it seem like a fiendish mask. The low light, perpetual fog, and the disturbing behavior of the coroner make the morgue a truly disturbing place to visit.

What Dr. Cream Knows

Dr. Cream seems equally fascinated and horrified by the marikith. Although during Day Three he merely dissects the monster’s corpse, if the heroes return in later days they find he has literally hacked it to pieces. He eagerly shows the most unusual parts of the monster’s anatomy to the PCs, pointing out that it has no rigid body parts (apart from fangs and claws) or sexual organs. The marikith seem to be able to compress their bodies to an incredible degree, and probably live in a kind of hive dominated by a single breeding pair. Judging by the membranes that fold over the creature’s eyes, they are probably accustomed to living in the dark, presumably in the sewers. During the lecture he prods the marikith’s shiny body relentlessly, muttering obscure medical terminology like ‘nictitating ocular membranes’, ‘retinal bioluminescence’, ‘water-vascular skeleton’, and ‘the echinodermic skin layer’.

When it comes to Bloody Jack and his victims, Dr. Cream is actually very useful – he can’t bear to play the fool, partly from pride in his genius and partly confidence that the PCs won’t be able to defeat Bloody Jack anyway. He gladly points out any clues on the bodies that the heroes have missed, makes informed guesses as to how each victim died, and even ‘speculates’ as to why Jack takes the brains of his victims. (‘He probably does it to gain some insight into his victim’s memories. Certain theories of the mind suggest that one’s mental patterns can be deciphered from the physical form of the brain. He would be the perfect mimic. After all, better the devil you know...’) The PCs should gradually realize that Dr. Cream is not all right in the head; he seems unduly awed of the killer.

Dr. Cream is more wary of connecting Jack with himself. He tries to foster the belief that Jack is simply an unusual doppelganger, not a golem, hoping to lead suspicious thoughts astray. He is also wary of giving Sodo’s game away, knowing that the doppelganger lord holds his life in his hands with the *timed scarab of death*. Rather than lie about the doppelganger clans and the meaning of the Blood Ritual, he simply says that, as a man of science, he couldn’t hypothesize about Jack’s motives for murder without more information at his disposal.

Strangely, Dr. Cream is not at all interested in dissecting any doppelganger corpses. However, if the PCs are present when he does so, Dr. Cream accidentally sets off one of the *scarabs of death*. Watching the *scarab* burrow into the creature’s heart is the only time the characters see a look of true horror on the coroner’s face. If he gets his hands on Luda’s corpse, he puts a lot of effort into trying to remove the *scarab* ‘safely’ – to no avail, of course. The PCs may even notice him scratching his chest uncomfortably.

Moving On

If the heroes visit the coroner early in the morning, they may need to return to the boarding house to discover Mrs. Burton’s body in *A Grisly Discovery*. Otherwise, they may return to the main wing of the guard station to see Jack escape (*Victory Undone*) or begin searching for the killer in the city.

NIGHT THREE

A Request For Help

Sometime during the evening, the PCs are approached by Edward Chaswick. The priest reveals that he has been following the Bloody Jack investigation with interest, especially the heroes’ role in it. He and the other members of his sect have decided that the adventurers are perfect to help further the Philosophy of Humanity’s role.

Chaswick quickly reveals the Philosophy’s goal of helping a doppelganger achieve the blessed state of humanity by trapping it in human form. The rite to accomplish this has been prepared and tested and now only needs a subject.

Chaswick asks the PCs to capture Bloody Jack alive if at all possible (reasonably, he believes that Jack is a doppelganger). He claims that if Jack can be redeemed, then surely the rest of the doppelganger race can be saved as well. He pointedly adds that this will immeasurably improve the situation of the humans in Paridon and stop the Bloody Jack ritual murders. He explains that a different doppelganger commits the murders every cycle and only by enlightening all of them will the killing stop. If the PCs agree to at least try to capture Jack, Edward offers them a *ring of mind shielding*. If not, he leaves in a huff.

As noted in Day Two, Edward is something of an expert on doppelgangers. He can add any background to the current situation that the heroes might be missing, although he knows nothing about the murders themselves. If asked about Jack’s penchant for eating the brains of his victims, read the following.

“Doppelgangers maintain their disguises by reading the minds of those around them and altering their behavior to match what their observers expect. In that way, they are almost flawless impersonators. In

Jack’s case, the doppelganger might have found a way to gain the memories of his victims from their brains, making him a *truly* flawless impersonator. Of course, this would also mean that Jack is unlikely to change shape unless he has someone else’s brain to consume; doppelgangers are cowardly creatures, so I don’t believe that Jack would give up what will have become an important emotional reassurance for him. He may even have forgotten how to change form without consuming a brain.”

Once he has exacted a promise from the PCs and answered any questions they may have, Edward makes his apologies and leaves to prepare for Jack’s arrival, leaving them to hunt down the killer

Hunting the Magistrate

Both the guard and the PCs spend the night hunting for Rhodes in a city that largely believes that Bloody Jack is still locked up. Constables take to the streets, ringing their bells and warning people that Jack is still at large. The officers (Wortle notwithstanding) visit Rhodes’ friends and family, warning them that Jack may be coming for them.

The PCs can accompany either the constables or a group of officers, or strike out on their own. There are two basic methods for finding Bloody Jack, depending on what skill they prefer to use.

Situation	Diplomacy	Bluff	Intimidate
The PCs present Jack’s <i>modus operandi</i> , having figured out all the clues	+4	+2	-
PCs physically threaten their source	-6	-4	+4
PCs claim Jack will come for the source next if not apprehended tonight	+2	+2	+2
PCs insinuate that their source is covering for Jack because some of them are doppelgangers. This only applies if the PC’s are talking to more than one person.	-2	+4	+2

An unsuccessful check means that either the source doesn’t know where Rhodes would go or doesn’t disgrace his memory by revealing the truth. The hero can make three attempts before midnight. If they have already tried Gathering Information, they only have time for one attempt (and vice versa; if the heroes have only made one attempt at interviewing one of Rhodes’ confidantes, they have time for one attempt at Gathering Information).

A successful check means that the PCs finally discover Rhodes’ ‘dirty secret’: a weakness for scarlet women, particularly those of a particular brothel in the West End. Rhodes retreated here several times when he didn’t want to be bothered by day-to-day concerns. If Bloody Jack really does adopt the habits of his victim, that’s where he’ll go.

If the heroes go with the constables or otherwise stop people in the street and ask them if they’ve seen a man matching Rhodes’ description, they must make a Gather Information check (DC 25). If the check is successful, the PCs manage to find enough people to lead them to a brothel in Paridon’s West End. Naturally, they arrive just on the stroke of midnight. If the check fails, they realize they’re getting nowhere in enough time to use the second method.

The second method involves contacting people who knew Rhodes and trying to find out from them where he might have gone. (Hopefully, the players will have worked out by now that the murderer tends to assume the habits of his victims). Obvious targets for interrogation include Rhodes’ wife, his legal secretary, fellow judges, friends at the gentlemen’s club or the remaining eight members of the City Council.

The players should roleplay their attempt to obtain the information and then the DM can use their main tactic to determine the skill used. Diplomacy (DC 17) is used if the PCs are polite and try to use a rational argument. Bluff (DC 20) is used if they try to trick their source by claiming to have more information than they do. Obviously, Intimidation (DC 23) is used if they threaten their informant, but if the roll fails by 10 or more, the character goes to the guard, and the PCs are arrested the following morning.

Confrontation at Midnight

The PCs presumably race to the brothel, arriving just as the clock finishes chiming twelve. Read the following to the players.

The sonorous chimes of the clock tower are echoing through the city as you turn into the street holding the brothel. The brothel is a tenement made of rough stone, three stories tall. The front of the building is covered in windows, most of which are obscured by scarlet curtains. A pair of lanterns hang on either side of the front door, which is open invitingly. As you run towards the building, you see a patrol of constables – perhaps having received similar information – also thundering towards it. One guardsman runs inside. The other three skid to a halt, spreading out and blocking off the front of the building. Apart from the one courageous soul, no one

seems brave enough to go inside the brothel; everyone is waiting for someone else to go first

Suddenly, piercing screams erupt from a room at the top of the building. The cry is taken up by everyone in the building as door are slammed back and people hurry out of their rooms to see what the commotion is. Almost before the clock's chimes have faded from the air, the street echoes with pandemonium.

As soon as the PCs move towards the door, a woman runs out of it, shrieking in terror. She's dressed revealingly (by Paridon's standards at least) and it is obvious that she isn't wearing a *scarab*. She does have a bit of blood splattered on her dress. She's in a blind panic and shrieks, "Bloody Jack's got Mary! He's got Mary and he's still upstairs!"

If the PCs start inside, the woman grabs someone's arm and cries, 'Don't leave me alone out 'ere!' One of the constables agrees to stay behind, but a PC is more than welcome to stay too. If one does, take careful note of the number of rounds that pass while the rest are inside.

The stairs and hallway are narrow and blocked by hysterical women, so it takes nearly a minute to force a path to Mary's room. When the PCs get there, Rhodes is indeed still there, leaning over an obviously dead woman sprawled face down on the bed, the *Fang of the Nosferatu* in his hand. Rhodes greets the PCs civilly, then leaps forward to battle them.

In reality, 'Rhodes' is Luda, who ran into the building a few moments ago in the shape of the first guardsman. The doppelganger, knowing full well what fate awaits him at Sodo's hands if Jack doesn't complete the ritual, has decided to delay the PCs enough for the golem to escape. Taunting the PCs the whole time, Luda fights until he is nearly dead, using his *alter self* ability to make his wounds seem worse than they are. Once he is close to death, the doppelganger collapses, pretending to be overwhelmed. His form shifts to a guardsman, to one of the Burton's servants, to Lucy, and finally to his natural shape.

Of course, the PCs are unlikely to be satisfied by this and will probably make sure 'Bloody Jack' is really dead. He is wearing one of the *scarabs of death*, so setting this off or performing a coup de grace ensures that Luda never bothers anyone again. If they remove the *Fang of the Nosferatu* from Luda's presence, or if the doppelganger is truly killed, it quickly reverts to an ordinary dagger.

The slain woman has a pillow over her head, as though it had been used to hold her against the mattress. Like the other victims, the back of her head has been carved open. But if they turn her over, the victim is the same shrieking woman they encountered outside!

If a PC stayed with the scarlet woman, cut back to the street now. The woman, who was clutching her guardian's arm fearfully, suddenly clenches it in an

iron grip, balls up a fist and viciously punches her guardian. Jack attacks as violently as possible, trying to knock out or otherwise disable the character so she can flee. She asked someone to stay with her to throw off suspicion and wants to escape before the others can return.

If the PCs left a constable with Mary, they rush down to find the man lying unconscious in the street with a broken jaw and nose. Obviously the state of any PC left behind depends on how the confrontation played out. If they were killed, Jack has stolen the body and devoured the brain. (Jack must have his latest victim's memories on Day Four, regardless of who that victim was). If so, Wortle is a good choice as a replacement PC.

In any event, Jack has slipped through the guard's fingers again. The PCs are free to question some of the other streetwalkers, or return to the boarding house to sleep.

THE FOURTH DAY

*Nothing is ever done in this world until
men are
prepared to kill one another if it is not
done.*

—George Bernard Shaw
Major Barbara (1907)

DAY FOUR

Seeking the Scarlet Woman

This morning's *Newsbill* prints a scathing series of articles about Bloody Jack's two escapes from custody, first at the jail and later at the brothel. Despite the annoyance, this does have its benefits: now, almost everyone in Paridon knows Jack's current identity and is on the lookout. Hopefully, it will be a lot harder for 'the Scarlet Woman' to claim another victim.

Jenny is quite unwilling to accompany the PCs in their investigation today; it simply isn't done for a woman of any standing to enter a brothel, and she will try to convince any female heroes to stay behind with her. She is somewhat shocked if her entreaties don't succeed. However, she will meet up with the adventurers later, after they have finished visiting houses of ill repute. She is still intrigued by the PCs and their investigation.

Mary has fewer friends than the Burtons or Rhodes and far less places to turn. Despite this, it is very hard for the PCs to find her. If the PCs simply try Gathering Information, wandering the streets in the hope that someone has seen her, they find only red herrings. Now that the Paridoners finally have a solid target to focus their constant paranoia upon, any streetwalker is a suspect. The PCs will be directed to one brothel or side street after another after women that looked a bit too flirtatiously at someone. Neighbors condemn each other over petty grudges and strange glances. Lynch mobs roam the rougher parts of the West End, attacking almost every woman that shows her face in the street. Many guardsmen are reassigned from hunting Bloody Jack to control the violence, making it even harder to find Mary.

The day is not entirely without hope, however. If the PCs ask the other 'low women' of the brothel who Mary might turn to, they can come up with a few

names. Most of these are clients she seemed to like and who liked her, although one is Mary's sister Catherine who lived in a tenement in the south. Most of these names are dead ends; none of the clients have seen her, and Catherine hasn't heard from Mary in months. However, she does remember an old flame that pursued her sister all through her twenties – a common laborer named Frederick Deeming. However, she hasn't seen or heard from him in years.

Deeming's name is not on the prostitutes' list of clients, but they do know who he is. They never knew his name, but a man dressed as a laborer used to come around once a month or so, standing outside the brothel and shouting endearments at Mary's window until she either let him in or forced him to leave. Even though he used to scare away the other customers and didn't seem too bright, Mary seemed to like him – after the squalor of her normal activities, she found his flattery charming. Not that he ever got anywhere; Mary only let him in to talk. She never took him up to the bedchambers.

If the PCs track Deeming down, they find that he hasn't seen her all day. In fact, he was unaware that she had been killed (he doesn't read the *Newsbill*) and the news is a hard blow for him. According to Deeming, she was trying to get out of 'the life', with the help of a kind-hearted priest named Ned. With this admission, Deeming breaks down completely. He is utterly distraught at his loss.

'Ned' is of course Edward Chaswick and that is indeed where Mary has gone, knowing that members of his sect are the few people in all of Paridon that will give her sanctuary. Unfortunately, if the PCs don't realize this, they are left without any clues.

Fallen Friends

If Bloody Jack has assumed the form of one of the PCs rather than that of Mary, the events obviously occur slightly differently. The *Newsbill* reports that Bloody Jack is in the form of a foreign traveler, and the PCs and other foreigners must bear the brunt of Paridon's paranoia.

People refuse to speak to them, or be in the same room as them. Hansom cabs don't stop, people cross the road to avoid them and every kindness the PCs offer is met with fear and hostility. Mrs. Haversham throws all their belongings out on the street and even Jenny is wary around them. The mobs in the West End attack the foreign merchants trapped by the border closure, although they don't attack an armed and capable force like the PCs. The PCs are completely alone in the fog-bound city; no one will help them.

However, as a PC, Bloody Jack is still aware that Edward Chaswick aims to redeem the doppelgangers.

As such, he seeks out the priests in the hope that they will give him sanctuary, just as Mary does.

Manhunt

Not surprisingly, Edward Chaswick is well aware of who Mary really is, and he does indeed give her sanctuary. He is also well aware that no one else outside his sect approves of the Philosophy of Mankind's goal to redeem the doppelgangers, so they keep the fact that they've hidden Bloody Jack a secret. Both he and Mary try to lie low throughout the day.

Once the PCs figure out who 'Ned' is, they will probably head to the temple. Ironically they arrive just as Chaswick is preparing to move Jack to a new hiding place and the other priests of his sect are quite upset at having the PCs appear at just the wrong moment. They vigorously deny knowledge of Chaswick's whereabouts (perhaps *too* vigorously, as anyone making a successful Sense Motive check (DC 10) will see) and try to lead the adventurers into the heart of the building, away from any windows or doors through which they may see Edward and Jack escaping. The priests are obviously anxious and too eager to get the heroes to follow them.

Have the PCs make a Spot check (DC 15). Those who are successful see a flicker of movement from one corner of their eye. Through one of the church's windows, the adventurers can see Edward helping Mary into a hansom cab. They have only a moment to act before Edward closes the door. He then quickly raps his cane on the windowsill to signal the driver, and the carriage lurches off.

The PCs have two options: to stay at the temple and demand the truth from the priests or rush out into the street, hail a cab and chase Chaswick and Jack into the misty streets (it is obvious that they can't chase the cab on foot, but luckily even if Jack is in the form of one of the PCs, the cab picks them up).

If the PCs hail a cab, the cabdriver whips his horses brutally and the PCs speed off. Use the following description as a guide for the chase. Feel free to break it up with whatever dice rolls you feel are appropriate to increase the tension.

After a few minutes of tense pursuit – you have no idea how the driver manages to find them in the fog – Chaswick's cab appears from the fog. For a moment it seems as though you will overtake them easily, but the other driver looks anxiously over his shoulder and whips his horses. They lurch awkwardly into a canter. In response, your driver whips his horses even harder.

You can hear nothing but the thunder of hooves, the crack of the whip and the occasional scream of someone leaping to safety as the two cabs duel for position. Your carriage shakes like it is going to fly apart at any moment, but the driver is relentless. Even above the thunder of the wheels, you can hear him bellowing at the horses and whipping them furiously. You feel a pang of unease at his brutal behavior, but at

least you can rest assured that you will capture Bloody Jack

Chaswick's lead is eroded more and more. The bloodied, foam-covered flanks of your horses are almost level with the running board of his cab when suddenly it careens around a corner. Your horses whinny in fear, but continue to gallop straight ahead.

The driver is actually a doppelganger obeying Sodo's orders to bring the PCs to him in the West End. It ignores whatever abuse the PCs offer, concentrating on getting them to Sodo's current lair.

If the PCs stay at the temple, the priests relax now that Chaswick has safely escaped. They tell the PCs that he has taken Jack to the site where the ritual to trap him into human form will occur. As they all wear *rings of mind shielding* and are fervent believers in the morality of their quest, they cannot be charmed or otherwise compelled into revealing where this site is. If the PCs continue badgering, however, one will eventually say that Edward is returning at dusk to collect the other priests. The PCs can talk to him then.

Moving On

Since it is still some time until nightfall, the PCs will probably want to spend it elsewhere. The priests certainly don't want them to stay at the temple. If they use a cab to leave the temple, it immediately takes off at breakneck speed towards the West End.

If they don't use a cab, one still pulls up alongside them. The driver leans down from his high seat, and as he removes his top hat, the PCs see one of their own number staring down at them. (If Jack killed a PC, this is a good choice for the doppelganger's form. Otherwise, simply choose a PC at random). The doppelganger coldly says, "Get into the cab; the lord wants to see you. If you don't, everyone you've spoken to today will be killed". Hopefully, the PCs obey this order; the doppelgangers are as good as their word.

An Ominous Meeting

The cab eventually stops outside a run-down old warehouse. If the PCs were taken by surprise, the doppelganger driver changes his form into that of one of the heroes and greets them with, "The lord wants to see you. Go in or everyone you have spoken to today will be killed." On cue, the warehouse door swings open with a slow creak, seemingly by itself. The driver grins wickedly and drives off as soon as all the PCs are out of the cab, leaving them completely alone.

Inside the warehouse it is pitch black. All of the windows are sealed with boards and tar and there are no lamps. If the PCs manage to find a light somehow, they see that the building is almost completely empty. The only feature is a curtained enclosure against the wall opposite the door (behind which Sodo is hiding). Thin tendrils of mist flow through the large room. The darkness doesn't bother Sodo; not only does he have darkvision 60', he can keep track of where the PCs are

and what they are doing with his *detect thoughts* ability.

If the PCs are without light, Sodo leaves his concealing enclosure and silently prowls through the darkness, speaking to them suddenly from just behind before darting away again. He is addicted to fear, and does everything he can to unnerve the adventurers.

If any of the PCs can see, Sodo remains hidden. Every so often, the PCs hear a creak of wood or a rustle from the curtains as the doppelganger lord endlessly changes form. This constant shapeshifting is also betrayed in his voice. At first, Sodo speaks with the rich, dark voice of an seducer. As he speaks, however, it changes in pitch and style, never staying the same for more than a minute at a time. The more angry or excited he gets, the faster the changes occur.

“Good afternoon. I must say, it is good to finally meet you. I have heard so much about you.

“You have become quite a frustration for myself and my minions, sticking your noses in wherever they’re not wanted. Although you may not realize it, you have come close to disturbing Bloody Jack no less than three times since you arrived, and I simply cannot allow this to continue.

“The ritual has become vital to Paridon’s survival. If it is not completed on schedule... Far worse creatures than me lurk beneath the city – creatures foul enough to drive even *me* into the light. The ritual is the only thing that prevents them from escaping the sewers and rampaging through the streets. You must stop your interference, for the sake of every living thing in Paridon.”

Sodo remembers quite clearly from last cycle how disruptive and powerful foreign adventurers can be to his plans. However, doppelgangers are the most manipulative creatures in Ravenloft, and Sodo is a more than capable of this twisting the PCs around his finger. He is also genuinely worried about the marikith’s usurpation of the sewers and their increased presence in Paridon over the last few days. Quite rightly, he suspects that whatever controls the marikith wants to wrest control of the *Fang of the Nosferatu* from him. Rather than waste his time threatening the adventurers, he has decided to kill two birds with one stone.

Because he sadistically enjoys frightening people, Sodo is more than happy to continue spinning his half-truths for as long as he can feed off the adventurer’s fear. Able to read the adventurers’ minds, he is also able to present a very seductive argument to convince them to help him.

What is the ritual for?

“The *Fang of the Nosferatu* is a powerful tool and the ritual allows me to harness some of that power. I am then able to defend this city from the monsters that live in the sewers. Although a few manage to slip past

me, on the whole I can keep Paridon from being overwhelmed. Surely six lives every thirteen years are a little enough cost for protecting every living thing in Paridon?”

What are the marikith?

“The sewer creatures are terrible monsters, and I say that as one who has lived for a century and a half amongst those you might give a similar label. They are no more intelligent than animals, but every speck of their brain is filled with the desire to kill. We call them ‘marikith’. They have kidnapped many of our people, as well as the humans. They feed on fear and live only to destroy. Most terribly, some unknown force seems to direct their actions from deep in the sewers. I don’t know who or what this force is, but I do know it intends nothing good for Paridon.”

If the PCs point out that the murders have been continuing for far longer than there have been any evidence of the marikith, Sodo says,

“Yes, originally the ritual was simply to siphon the *Fang’s* power, but now we use it exclusively to stop the marikith. Even we recognize the danger they represent to all of us. Paridon is our home too, and we do what we must to defend it.”

Who is Bloody Jack?

“I have always found it amusing that you humans give such a terrible name to the only being able to keep the marikith from your doors. Bloody Jack is my loyal servant, the protector of Paridon. I cannot give you any further details; his role in this is simply too important to let you accidentally or deliberately disrupt him. There have been times when I wish there was another way to protect Paridon from the marikith – despite what you humans think of us, we are not complete monsters – but without knowing who directs them, we have no choice.”

What do you propose?

Sodo tries to lead the PCs to volunteer to investigate the marikith. Not only will this give him time to complete the *Fang’s* blood ritual, if they succeed he will be in a far more powerful position to confront the marikith.

“I need you to enter the sewers, find out what monster controls the marikith, and if possible, destroy it. By themselves, the marikith are stupid, barely more than insects, and I believe that if we can kill whatever controls them, they will revert to nothing more than beasts. Even if you can’t kill their leader, any information will strengthen our position and make it easier to protect Paridon.”

If the PCs are unwilling to trust the doppelganger lord, Sodo adds more incentive to obey him.

“I see you still don’t trust me. Very well. To prove my good faith, I will order Jack to stop the murders until you have finished your investigation. If you are successful, there will be no more murders. I give you my word.

“I have also prepared some magical blades to assist you. They are powerful items, crafted by the most powerful sorcerers amongst my people, imbued with a hatred for the marikith and a love of the light. With these blades, your chances of success are far improved.”

Needless to say, both of Sodo’s offers are useless. He has no intention of halting the ritual, and the daggers he gives to the PCs are simply masterwork daggers imbued with permanent *light* and *Nystul’s magical aura* spells (both with a caster level of 10). The magical aura makes the daggers seem like +2 *keen daggers*. There is one for each PC.

Who are you?

If asked this early in the conversation, Sodo gives only his name. However, if asked at an appropriately dramatic point, the doppelganger lord falls silent for a moment, before quietly hissing, “Do you *really* want to see who you are talking to?”

Sodo demands that the PC who asked the question step up to the curtain and hold out his hand (or simply that they hold out their hand, if they are still in the dark).

The curtain billows slightly as Sodo grabs hold of the PC’s wrist. They have just enough time to notice that the hand holding them seems to be getting larger when Sodo suddenly tears down the curtain (or ignites a sunrod). The creature holding on to the PC is a nightmare made flesh: features meander across its face, its form warps and flows from one grotesque chimera to the next and the PC is in direct contact with it, able to feel every change as it happens. Not surprisingly, such close contact with Sodo’s flickering body requires a Horror save (DC 16). If the save fails, Sodo releases the PC after a minute of ecstatic feeding. If not, he pulls the PC closer to him and begins changing form even faster, assuming even more disturbing forms and trying to provoke some reaction. Only when he has fed upon the PC’s revulsion will he release them. The other PCs must also make Horror saves (DC 13).

Moving On

Once he has exposed himself or if the PCs attack at any point, Sodo leaps through a doorway behind him (one previously concealed by the curtain). As he leaves, he growls “Leave Jack alone! Our eyes are always on you!” before bounding into a waiting cab. The PCs are left in the warehouse alone.

If they ignore his advice and return to the Temple of the Divine Form to meet Edward, go to *The Doomed Rite*. If they obey Sodo, then life continues as normal for several days. On the morning of the sixth day, they are awoken by joyous shouts from all over the city. During the early hours of the morning, the shadow killers rose out of their underground home, hunted down Jack, and tore him to pieces in full view of a party of revelers. They then took his knife and vanished back into the sewers. Go to *The Doom Prophet*.

NIGHT FOUR

The Doomed Rite

This scene begins at dusk, when Chaswick returns to the temple to take the other priests to his secret sanctuary. If the PCs meet him here, he offers an impassioned speech in defense of his plan to redeem Jack.

Chaswick squares his shoulders nobly. “I don’t expect you to understand what we are trying to achieve. But if you gave it just a minute’s thought – a single moment of reflection – you could appreciate the magnitude of what our success would mean for Paridon.

“If we can redeem the doppelgangers – give them the sacred state of humanity that they desire so much – we would solve most of Paridon’s problems. For the first time in years, people would want to get married and have children. We would be lifted from the shadow of fear and learn to *live* again. And if we can redeem Bloody Jack, then surely we can redeem all of the doppelgangers!

“If Jack devours the identities of his victims, then some part of the real Mary must remain inside him. Mary was a good soul, even if she took some wrong turns in her life, and I believe that her soul would make an excellent foundation for Jack’s redemption. Please, if this works – when it works – we will better the lives of everything in Paridon. Won’t you please help us? Can’t you see what we’re trying to do?”

Edward has to perform the rite at midnight, when Jack’s undesirable elements are closest to the surface. Hopefully, the spell will lock him into Mary’s form and disrupt the compulsion to kill. They can then begin ‘rebuilding’ Mary.

It is obvious that Edward firmly believes in his plan – his eyes almost glint with passion during his speech. Because he is so dedicated, it is an easy matter for the PCs to convince him that they want to help too. He simply can’t imagine that they could object to his plan, so it is easy to bluff him into taking them to the sanctuary.

Edward, the PCs and the other priests climb into a large covered wagon. One of the priests drives. The wagon rumbles slowly through the empty, fog-bound streets for nearly an hour, finally stopping in front of a soap factory. Edward explains that the Philosophy of Mankind owns the building and has been converting the cellar into a sanctuary for years. They’ve had quite a few successes already.

He leads the PCs into the cellar, lighting lanterns as he goes. The yellow glow reveals a maze of cells and connecting rooms, a few of which already have lanterns glowing in them. These cells are home to

'patients' that the clerics are trying to reform by restoring or somehow cleansing their humanity. The cell doors are all made of ironbound wood and have average locks.

Room 1

The first cell is home to a jackalwere, who growls and snarls threats as the PCs pass. It has been trapped here for months, forced to live on butcher's scraps while the priests experiment and pray for its salvation. The jackalwere spends most of its time in its hybrid form.

Nothing is inside the cell apart from a moldy straw palette and an iron food bowl. As the jackalwere has made several escape attempts, its door is heavily barred as well as locked.

If the jackalwere should escape, its first impulse is to attack the priests that have tormented it for so long.

Jackalwere: Male jackalwere; CR 3; Small/Medium-sized shapechanger; HD 4d8+8; hp 26; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +5 natural); Atk Bite +5 melee (1d6+2); SA Gaze of sleep; SQ Alternate form, damage reduction 15/cold iron, darkvision 60 ft., scent; AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +6, Disguise +6, Hide +6, Intimidate +6, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Spot +5; Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Multiattack.

Special Attacks: *Gaze of Sleep (Su):* Sleep, as cast by a 4th level sorcerer, 30 feet, Will negates DC 14.

Alternate Form (Su): Jackalweres can transform into a jackal (treat as a dog) or a Small or Medium-sized humanoid of either gender as though using a *polymorph self* spell. Changing forms is a standard action, and the jackalwere can remain in any form indefinitely. Unlike a creature using the *polymorph self* spell, a jackalwere can use its supernatural abilities when it assumes the form of a humanoid.

Room 2

The next room is neatly decorated in tapestries and cushions. Reclining in one corner reading is a teen-age boy, Francis. He is an infected werewolf and one of the few people here voluntarily. If released in his human form, he stays in his cell until endangered (by the marikith attack, for example). Then he tries to flee. If he transforms, he attacks the priests. His trigger is seeing frightened people. His secondary aspect is a wolf.

Francis: Male infected werewolf; CR 3; Medium-sized shapechanger; HD 2d8+4; hp 13; Init +0/+6* (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft./50 ft.*; AC 12 (+2 natural)/16* (+2 Dex, +4 natural); Atk Unarmed strike +0 melee (1d3 subdual)/Bite +3 melee* (1d6+1); SA None/Trip, curse of lycanthropy*; SQ Wolfsbane vulnerability, wolf empathy/Wolfsbane vulnerability,

wolf empathy, scent, damage resistance 15/silver*; AL LG/CE*; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 11/13*, Dex 11/15*, Con 11/15*, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: As human: Control Shape +1, Craft (cobbler) +5, Knowledge (local) +4; Skill focus (Craft [cobbler])

As wolf: Hide +3, Listen +14, Move Silently +4, Search +8, Spot +14, Wilderness Lore +0 (+4 when racking by scent); Blind-fight, Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse (bite).

* When in wolf form

Special Attacks: *Alternate Form (Su):* Francis can transform into wolf form as a standard action, as though using the *polymorph self* spell (although his gear doesn't change). Upon changing form, he regains hit points as if having rested for a day.

Curse of Lycanthropy (Su): Anyone bitten by Francis in wolf form must make a Fortitude save (DC 18) or contract lycanthropy.

Trip (Ex): When in wolf form, Francis can attempt to trip an opponent as a free action on a successful bite attack, without having to make a touch attack or provoking an attack of opportunity. If the attempt fails, the opponent can't try to trip the werewolf.

Wolf empathy (Ex): Francis has a +4 racial bonus to influencing the reactions of a wolf or dire wolf, and can communicate simple commands if the creature is friendly.

Room 3

The next cell seems to contain a beautiful red-haired woman. As the heroes pass, she reaches pitifully through the barred window of her cell and begs for release. If anyone stops to talk to her, she suggestively offers to 'reward' them if they let her go. The cell smells faintly musty and crawls with spiders.

In reality, this cell is home to a red widow who was captured a few weeks ago. If released, she tries to flee, attacking anyone that gets in her way.

Red Widow: Female red widow; CR 6; Medium-sized shapechanger; HD 6d8+12; hp 39; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft./30 ft., climb 20 ft.*; AC 12 (+2 Dex)/18 (+2 Dex, +6 natural)*; Atk Unarmed strike +6 melee (1d3+2 subdual)/Bite +6 melee (1d4+2 and poison)*; SA Web, poison, fluid drain; SQ Alternate form, darkvision 60 ft.; AL NE; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 17.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +14, Climb +10, Diplomacy +12, Hide +6*, Jump +4 (+10*), Listen +3, Move Silently +6*, Sense Motive +10, Spot +3*; Alertness, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Bluff)

* When in spider form

Special Attacks: *Web (Ex)*– When in spider form, red widows can cast webs as a monstrous spider. If she succeeds in an opposed Str check with a creature caught in her web, she can pull her victim 10 feet towards herself with a standard action.

Poison (Ex)– Bite Fortitude save (DC 15); initial damage 1d6 temporary Strength, secondary damage 2d6 temporary Strength.

Fluid Drain (Ex)– When in spider form, the widow can drain blood and bodily fluids from a living victim with its fangs by making a successful grapple check. If it pins the foe, it drains fluids, inflicting 1d4 points of temporary Constitution damage each round the pin is maintained.

Alternate Form (Su)– A red widow’s natural form is that of Medium-size monstrous spider. As a standard action, a red widow can assume a specific humanoid form as if using the *polymorph self* spell (though her gear does not change). A slain red widow reverts to spider form. A red widow can use her special attacks only while in spider form. If grappling, a red widow can shift from one shape to another while maintaining a pin.

Room 4

In this cell is a caliban, Penelope. She has been in the priest’s care for many years, and was the first person to be taken into the priest’s sanctuary. Her cell is homey and comfortable, with a small table and chair and a bed.

Penelope is not actually locked into her cell. She is free to leave whenever she wants, and stays out of hope that the priests can make her ‘normal’. During the fight with the marikith, she charges out to help the priests.

Penelope: Female caliban Com3/Bar1; CR 2; Medium-sized humanoid; HD 3d4+1d12+8; hp 22; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; AC; Atk Chair leg +3 (1d6+1); SA Rage 1/day; SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; AL NG; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +0, Listen +4, Profession (scribe) +5, Spot +4; Courage, Jaded.

Room 5

This cell seems to contain a middle-aged woman. She sits in her bare cell staring blankly at the door. Under no circumstances does she ever move or speak.

Originally, this woman was a doppelganger who was unlucky enough to be the first test case for Edward’s spell. The sudden loss of her shapeshifting powers and the terrible pain that accompanied that loss drove the doppelganger into catatonia. Even if released, she continues staring blankly at the door.

Room 6

The doppelganger locked in this room was the second test case for the ritual Bloody Jack is about to undergo. Unfortunately, being trapped in the form of an elderly man has driven it mad (although not to the extent of the original subject). As the PCs pass, it wails pathetically about how the clerics have ‘maimed’ and ‘crippled’ it.

If this doppelganger is released, it will try to attack the nearest priest. It will then retreat to its cell, sobbing

and tearing at its own flesh, wailing, “No change! There’s no change! Even the blood wasn’t enough!”

Doppelganger: CR 2; Medium-sized shapechanger; HD 4d8+4; hp 22; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+1 Dex, +6 natural); Atk 2 slams +5 melee (1d6+2); SA Detect thoughts; SQ Immunities; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +10*, Disguise +10*, Listen +8, Sense Motive +3, Spot +5; Alertness, Dodge.

* This doppelganger gains a +4 bonus to Bluff checks when it can read its opponent’s mind, although it is rarely coherent enough to do so.

Room 7

In the final cell is Mary. She is still dressed as a prostitute with the *Fang of the Nosferatu* concealed as a metal brooch. Since she is aware that everyone knows she is Bloody Jack, she does her best to play to Edward’s ‘absorbed identity’ fantasies.

Mary stares sorrowfully through the barred window of her cell. The tears that course her cheeks glow silver in the lantern light.

“I don’t want to kill at midnight,” she says, her voice hollow with misery. “I don’t want to, but there’s something inside me that says I have to. I can feel it, like a crab, pinching my insides and making me do it. I have to! I can remember being other people, all the people I’ve ever killed. Please make it stop...” The woman bows her head.

“You see?” whispers Edward meaningfully. “Mary’s good soul still rests within Bloody Jack’s body. She is revolted by what the body makes her do. But with time, she will be able to overcome the malign influence, and learn to resist the impulse. Bloody Jack will dissipate, leaving only Mary.”

If asked about the *Fang of the Nosferatu*, Mary claims to have been attacked by some ruffians during her escape from the brothel last night. She dropped the knife during the fight and hasn’t been able to find it again. She suspects that one of the thugs picked it up.

The Ritual

The ritual is specifically designed to prevent doppelgangers from changing form; it is so powerful that no doppelganger can resist the magic, although many are driven insane by the intense pain that accompanies the transformation. It has no effect upon other creatures (including constructs like Bloody Jack).

It takes several hours for the priests to complete their preparations – the ritual is long and extremely complex. During this time, Mary remains locked in her cell. The PCs are free to watch, talk to the prisoners, or help for as long as they behave themselves. As soon as

they start to interfere, one of the priests will try to lead them into one of the trapped rooms.

These rooms surround the ritual site. They are like common animal traps in that they have two doors. Both doors are open when the victim is lured inside and then slammed shut to trap them. A single lever lets both doors fall, or they can be raised or lowered individually by hand. The doors are made of thick wood with a small barred window at the top. Breaking down the door or bending the bars requires a Strength check with DC 30. Trying to roll under a door as it falls is a Reflex save with DC 30; failing by 10 points or more means the character takes 1d8 damage from being crushed beneath the door as it falls, as well as being trapped within the room.

At 11:30, Mary is freed from her cells and the ritual begins. It takes nearly half an hour to complete and when it is done, Edward declares it a success. No doppelganger is able to resist the spell; the only danger is that the creature might be driven insane. As he still believes Mary is a doppelganger and she seems to have retained her sanity, the priests allow themselves a moment of joyous celebration for their ‘achievement’.

Just as the priests are congratulating themselves, a gangly black arm suddenly reaches out of a drain in the floor and yanks a priest off his feet. Marikith begin flooding into the room – squeezing out of drains, through windows, battering down doors – and attack everyone.

Clergy (10): Human Clr6; CR 6; Medium-sized humanoids; HD 6d8+12; hp 42; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC ; Atk Unarmed strike +6 (1d3+1 subdual); SA Spells, turn undead; AL ; SV Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +8; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +6, Diplomacy +6, Heal +7, Knowledge (shapechanger lore) +5, Knowledge (local or religion) +5, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +4; Improved Unarmed Strike, Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Still Spell, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike).

Spells (5/4+1/4+1/1+1): Cure minor wounds, detect magic, guidance (2), resistance; bless, command, cure light wounds, sanctuary; aid, cure moderate wounds, hold person, spiritual weapon; prayer. Note this list doesn’t include domain spells.

Domains: 2 of Knowledge, Law, Strength.

Possessions: Ring of mind shielding.

Marikith Hunter (20): CR 2; Medium-sized aberration; HD 3d8+3; hp 16; Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft.. climb 20 ft.; AC 17 (+4 Dex, +3 natural); Atk 2 claws +5 melee (1d4+3), bite +0 melee (2d4+3); SA Voice mimicry; SQ Compression, darkvision 120 ft, immunities, light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 19, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 5.

Skills and Feats: Escape Artist +16, Hide +12, Listen +6, Move Silently +12, Spot +4; Improved Initiative.

The appearance of the marikith seems to terrify Mary. In the havoc, Edward drags the scarlet woman to one of the trapped rooms and to safety. While she cowers in terror, he closes one door and moves to protect her against the creatures.

Just then, the clock begins to strike midnight. Mary suddenly leaps to her feet, slams the other door shut and brutally stabs Edward in the back. The marikith immediately begin rushing towards her (to steal the *Fang of the Nosferatu*, although it may look like they’re coming to Jack’s aid). The marikith begin battering at the doors. If the PCs want to come to Edward’s aid, they must first find a way past the horde of monsters.

With his dying breath, Edward gasps, “You’re... not... Mary.” The golem smiles. “No. I am Bloody Jack. I kill at midnight. It is what I was made to do.” As the golem speaks, it transforms from Mary to Edward Chaswick, one limb at a time, and as Mary’s memories and emotions fade away, every word is delivered more coldly and flatly than the last. This is a marked change that the PCs can detect. As each body part transforms, it momentarily shifts back into its true form and the PCs can see the heavy stitches holding it together. Bloody Jack is not a doppelganger, even an unusual one – it is a golem made from the pieces of many doppelgangers!

The marikith finally break down the door just as Jack is about to consume Edward’s brain. Under the (possibly combined) onslaught of the marikith, the PCs and any surviving clergy, the golem is forced to flee without its bounty. It fights its way past any impediments, throwing off marikith left and right, before battering down the outer doors and escaping into the night. Most of the marikith follow it; a few stay behind, fighting to the death to stop any humans from pursuing Jack.

After Jack’s escape, the PCs must decide what to do with the priest’s ‘sanctuary’. Killing the prisoners (particularly the two mad doppelgangers) is probably cause for a Powers check.

Behind the Scenes

This scene details Sodo’s retribution against any party that persists in pursuing Bloody Jack. If they follow Sodo’s commands, the doppelgangers leave them alone.

While the PCs are waiting in the sanctuary for the ritual to be completed, Sodo sends out two groups of doppelgangers, one of each group disguised as a PC. One group goes to the guard station and asks to see the files on previous Bloody Jack cycles – they may have found a lead on this cycle’s murderer, but they need to check some old evidence first...

As soon as they are alone, the doppelgangers begin destroying the files, tearing them into pieces and setting fire to them. Once a good blaze is going, they calmly shut the door and leave. Although the fire is

discovered only a few minutes later, all the information on Bloody Jack is destroyed. The arson has the added bonus of convincing the guard that some vital clue was hidden in the flies somewhere; rather than combing the streets, they spend Day Five trying to reconstruct their files and discover the clue that will lead them to Bloody Jack's arrest. Of course, since this clue doesn't exist, their efforts are doomed and serve only to waste time.

The other group of doppelgangers goes to Mrs. Haversham's boarding house. Once inside, they kick open the door to the room where Jenny's father Philip lives and drag him into the lounge room. Laughing cruelly, the doppelgangers ransack the old man's room and beat him into unconsciousness. When Mrs. Haversham tries to intervene, they deal with her similarly. While neither are killed, they are both badly shaken and injured. Once again, the doppelgangers flee.

The purpose of Sodo's vengeance is to ensure that the PCs have no one to turn to on Days Five and Six. Mrs. Haversham is convinced that the heroes attacked her; even when faced with concrete evidence of their innocence, she refuses to let them back into the boarding house. She throws all their belongings into the street.

The Philosophy of Humanity are reluctant to associate themselves with people who know too much about their secret activities. Unless they blackmail the clergy (a successful Intimidate roll), they will find no help there.

Jenny spends all of Day Five taking care of her father, until, just before dusk, she is kidnapped by a party of marikith. The Hive Queen has been collecting her own set of six victims to complete the Blood Rite, and it appeals to her warped sense of justice that her final victim should be one of the people who have been hampering her efforts to steal the *Fang of the Nosferatu*. A marikith lures her to a drain by imitating the voice of one of the PCs. As soon as her curiosity gets the better of her, it leaps out and kidnaps her.

The guard try to arrest the PCs to find out what really happened, and if the PCs tell the truth – they had Bloody Jack locked in a cell but let him escape again – they will be none too impressed, and may believe that the PCs are doppelgangers. If they don't tell the truth, the guard will be sure that they have captured the doppelgangers. Either way, the adventurers are locked up pending further inquiries. If they escape, then all of the Guard will be hunting them in earnest, convinced they are aligned in some way with Bloody Jack.

In short, for the next two days, the PCs have no one to turn to at all.

Also during the evening, 'Dr. Cream' finally gives into his paternal hubris and pens a letter to the *Newsbill* on behalf of his creation. He slips the letter under the printshop door and vanishes into the night.

During the early hours of the next morning, the insane doppelgangers from the Philosophy of Humanity's safe house vanish without a trace.

Likewise, the coroner's office is closed all day too, with no sign of Dr. Cream. Now that Bloody Jack has changed identity twice, even Sodo has lost track of where it is, and the darklord has summoned Emil and the doppelgangers to try to work out where the golem would go. Appeasing Sodo takes up most of Emil's day; he cannot be found until nightfall.

Bloody Jack does nothing but hide all day, unmoving and barely even thinking, in an alley in the West End. It has no plan for the next murder. Without any stolen memories, the only person it knows is its creator.

THE FIFTH DAY

Brazen bells!

What a tale of terror, now their

turbulency tells!

In the startled ear of night

How they scream out their affright!

Too much horrified to speak,

They can only shriek, shriek

Out of tune

—Edgar Allan Poe
The Bells

DAY FIVE

Unlawful Imprisonment

Following the doppelgangers' largely successful attempts to discredit the PCs, the adventurers start the day being hunted by the guard. In the early hours of the morning, Francine Maxwell and a group of eight constables track down the PCs and inform them of their arrest. The Acting Chief Constable tries to reassure the PCs that the matter will be resolved quickly and harmlessly – they only want to hear the PCs' side of things. If they resist arrest, the guard will stop at nothing to capture them. If they agree to come along quietly, they are taken back to the guard headquarters and locked up in the cellblock.

By and large, the guard are distant and strictly professional. They have no idea whether they have captured humans or doppelgangers, or even if it was doppelgangers who performed the crimes the heroes are accused of. After all, common wisdom holds that only one doppelganger exists for each person. If this is true (and Inspector Maxwell is of two minds about this 'fact'), then the PCs are either arsonists or thugs. If the adventurers tell her the truth, then they could be either lying to create an alibi for themselves, in league with Bloody Jack or dangerously incompetent. Uncertain

what to do, the Acting Chief Constable decides to play it safe and assume the heroes are shapechangers.

Unfortunately, this means the guard intend to keep the PCs locked up until the end of the Bloody Jack murder cycle, when they can do no more harm. This enforced imprisonment should incense any heroes worth their salt, particularly since the *Newsbill* (with which the heroes are supplied during their breakfast) carries the headline, "Bloody Jack Taunts the Law". The main article purports to be a letter received last night from the killer himself, full of cruel hubris. 'Bloody Jack' claims that he is the perfect killer – when he takes a life, no one notices the victim is missing. He will never be caught and outwits his would-be captors at every turn. Unfortunately, the letter was delivered when Bloody Jack was in the custody of the Philosophy of Humanity, so it is unlikely to have been written by the golem.

The article sounds remarkably similar to one of Dr. Cream's rants about Bloody Jack, and by now it should be obvious that Dr. Cream knows far too much about the golem for them to be unconnected. (Adventurers who have encountered Emil Bollenbach before will undoubtedly already have realized the connection). Unfortunately, the guard are already half-convinced that the PCs are doppelgangers, so they don't take any accusations against the coroner (who has done considerably good work for the guard) seriously. If the PCs become too insistent, it will only serve to convince their captors that they have imprisoned slanderous doppelgangers. The only option the PCs have is to escape and bring Dr. Cream to justice themselves.

The cell where the PCs are being held is, unfortunately, quite secure. The window is barred and only 1 foot across. Bending enough bars to allow escape requires a Strength check with DC 25; even then, the PCs must have some way of squeezing through the tiny gap. The door is a grid of iron bars that are equally hard to break, with a well-made lock (hardness 10, 60 hp, break DC 25 and Open Locks DC 30). It is not unlocked at meal times; instead, the meals are slid through the bars and into the cell. However, if the PCs can somehow overpower him, their guard does have a set of keys. Even if the PCs manage to escape, they find that both the cellblock's heavy iron doors (to the guard station proper and to the coroner's morgue) are locked (hardness 10, 60 hp, break DC 28, Open Locks DC 33). The guard have learned since Rhodes' escaped.

Of course, within hours of the PCs' escape, every guardsman in Paridon will be looking for them, convinced they are doppelgangers in league with Bloody Jack. They must somehow evade capture for the rest of the day, while staying close enough to the

guard station to see Dr. Cream's return at nightfall. The rest of the day can include any number of 'near miss' encounters with the guard or real doppelgangers to impress their alienation upon the heroes.

NIGHT FIVE

Confronting the Coroner

As Emil is with Sodo all day, it is a relatively easy matter to break into the coroner offices and set up an ambush for him. His private chambers are full of damning evidence of his crimes. A successful Search roll (DC 15) uncovers a heavily annotated and dog-eared copy of *Van Richten's Guide to the Created*, full of disparaging remarks and ranting, and a series of notebooks describing Emil's career of creating golems. These notebooks include diagrams and precise, detailed methods for the creation of most of Emil's 'super golems', including Bloody Jack. Emil has even included notes on his recent marikith dissections, including thoughts about how their unique anatomy could further improve his creations. In short, Dr. Cream's office contains damning evidence that the coroner isn't just linked to Bloody Jack; he *made* it.

When Emil finally returns to the office, it is an easy matter to capture him. The doctor immediately surrenders at any physical threat to himself or his journals, and proudly owns up to everything when presented with the slightest evidence of his crimes (unless any members of the Guard except Wortle are present). He even fills in any blanks that the heroes retain, such as the purpose of the *timed scarabs of death*. This revelation makes the scientist wilt a little; he hadn't counted on the *scarabs* when he agreed to make a golem for Sodo.

Emil has no idea where Bloody Jack is now. Sodo had appointed two doppelgangers to keep track of the golem and the PCs killed *them*. However, if the PCs explain last night's events, Emil confirms that Jack will revert back to its core personality. Sooner or later, Emil believes, the golem will try to seek out its creator for further instructions, so the PCs must protect Emil if they want to find Jack. Emil confesses this very quickly if he is threatened – he is well aware that he is the heroes' (and Sodo's) only chance to track down Bloody Jack and uses that fact to his advantage.

Emil is quite happy to help the PCs set a trap for Bloody Jack, as long as they find a way to remove the *timed scarab of death*. At heart, he is convinced his creation can easily overwhelm the adventurers, and that once it is back in his presence, he will be able to control it (and take his revenge on everyone who has threatened him). He suggests the adventurers lure Bloody Jack to the city Clock Tower. The building is empty at night, so they won't be disturbed, and they can easily block off the main stairs to stop Jack escaping. Of course, the heroes may expand upon or ignore this plan as they see fit.

Final Showdown

The PCs have several hours to engineer their ambush. Bloody Jack (still disguised as Edward Chaswick) only appears a few minutes before midnight. Unfortunately Emil's plan works only too well. Jack does seek out his creator – not for advice, but to slay him.

Edward Chaswick's lean form suddenly appears from the gloom, the *Fang of the Nosferatu* clutched in one hand. His face is completely expressionless. The golem ignores you completely, staring at Emil instead. The pent-up tension in the murderer's body is almost terrifying in its intensity – its entire being is fixed on its creator, who returns the stare with open admiration. Emil's eyes almost glow with paternal pride. He seems completely unaware of the terrible intent apparent on his creation's visage.

'Jack. It is good that you have come to me for advice. Your new orders-'

'I have not come for new orders,' says Bloody Jack tonelessly. The golem continues to stride smoothly towards Emil, who takes a step back. His twisted face wrenches itself into an expression of confusion. 'I kill at midnight. It is what you made me to do.'

Emil's eyes widen in horror. The clockwork far above your heads begins to spin and grind noisily, preparing to strike twelve. Suddenly, the scientist darts away from his creation, running full pelt towards the stairs. As he goes, he screams, 'Kill one of the others! I am your creator! Kill them, I order you!'

Jack's expression never changes. 'I may. But I must kill at midnight.'

If at all possible, Emil runs all the way to the balcony at the top of the towers. Despite its threat, Bloody Jack doesn't particularly single Emil out as its victim, simply attacking whoever is closest. A determined assault convinces the golem to choose easier prey than the PCs, and it will follow Emil to the mist-shrouded top of the tower.

It is only two minutes (20 rounds) until midnight when the fight starts. On the hour, the clock begins striking, deafening everyone for the three rounds that it does so. By the end of that time, Bloody Jack *must* have killed someone with the *Fang of the Nosferatu*.

In the most likely case, this will be Emil. As he dies, however, his bizarre mental power activates, sending his mind into the body of his creation. As soon as Emil's eyes glaze over and he breathes his last, new understanding comes to Jack's face and one lip draws itself upwards in a reflection of Emil Bollenbach's nervous tic. A look of venomous hatred and disgust sweeps over the golem's slowly transforming face and it screams, 'Look what you've done to me!' The trapped Emil turns his fury on the PCs, battling to the

death. The madman gives no quarter, wanting only to avenge his death with the deaths of all the PCs.

Alternately, Bloody Jack's victim may have been a PC. In that case, Emil regains control of his creation just as the golem finishes transforming. With a triumphant grin made all the more horrible by the yellow beacon shining through the clock face, the madman extends a finger and commands the golem to attack! Once again, the PCs must face the golem's supernatural wrath.

When the golem is finally defeated, it topples slowly off the balcony. If Emil is still alive, its final act is to clench one hand around Jack's ankle. The mad scientist has time to give a strangled shriek before falling with his creation to the cobbled street far below. There is a crushing thud and a clink of metal as the *Fang of the Nosferatu* flies from the golem's outstretched hand.

Bloody Jack is finally defeated! Give the heroes a few moments to catch their breaths before their attention is directed below them once more – the scrape of a manhole cover being moved aside echoes through the still night. As the characters stare through the swirling fog, they can just make out a black shape leap out of the sewer, grab the magical dagger and scurry back into its subterranean realm. By the time they reach the bottom, the marikith is long gone.

Moving On

Luckily for the PCs, a passing constable saw the climactic battle, Jack's fall and the *Fang's* theft. He immediately summons some more guards and the PCs are cleared of any previous troubles. They killed Bloody Jack and they will be famous throughout Paridon. They are extensively questioned as the coroner's cart takes Bloody Jack and Emil away and all seems well with the world.

THE LAST DAY

*A story has been thought to its
conclusion
when it has taken its worst possible
turn.*

—Friedrich Dürrenmatt
“21 Points”, *The Physicists* (1962)

DAY AND NIGHT SIX

The Doom Prophet

Unfortunately for the PCs, the adventure is not over yet. As the PCs are making their way home from their crime scene, the same coach that took them to Sodo yesterday is waiting for them in a fog-bound, empty street. This time, however, the driver is in his natural form. Rather than threatening them, the shapechanger says, “Please get in. The lord wants to see you.” If they refuse, the doppelganger frowns with worry and pleads with them. He drives away after another refusal.

This time the PCs are taken (at the same breakneck speed) to an abandoned, broken-down manor. Heroes who played *Hour of the Knife* will immediately recognize the Bloodsworth estate, although the intervening thirteen years have not been kind to the abused house.

Once again, the driver lets the heroes out at the front door and drives off, leaving them to escape or go in as they please. Sodo is waiting for them inside the ruined shell. This time, he is sprawled uneasily across a throne-like chair in the ruined entrance hall, lit on either side by a flickering lantern. The guttering light serves only to heighten his disturbing appearance; Sodo is so upset by the loss of the *Fang of the Nosferatu* that his body is a constantly swirling mishmash of features, never still for even a moment.

“I warned you that creatures fouler than I coveted my beautiful *Fang*. The marikith have it now, and their Hive Queen is preparing to complete the ritual. If she takes a sixth life tonight and claims the powers of the knife, Paridon is doomed. My beautiful land will fall into her grasp and everything in it will be her playthings. You must get the *Fang* back! You must! If you don’t, I will lose everything, and if I do, I swear

that I will see you pay for my loss!” Sodo’s voice rises to a hysterical scream before choking off. The lord sounds terrified and desperate enough to carry out his threats

After a moment, the doppelganger lord continues in a much calmer voice. “I left you alive because I feared this day would come. None of my doppelgangers have ever entered the sewers and emerged... unchanged. I need pure souls to enter Timor and return the *Fang* to me. If you do, I swear to you that you will be allowed to leave Paridon unharmed and Paridon will be spared from the marikith for another thirteen years. What do you say? Will you help me save Paridon from the Hive Queen?”

Hopefully, the heroes will agree. Sodo will agree to almost any bargain to get the *Fang of the Nosferatu* back; after all, he has no real intention of fulfilling any bargain once the adventurers have given him back the *Fang*. If they don’t agree, Sodo’s dire predictions comes true. The marikith overwhelm Paridon and the doppelgangers ensure the heroes’ last days are filled with pain and horror. If they do agree, Sodo lets them go unharmed. His final warning is that the adventurers must be on their “best behavior” in Timor, and must get the *Fang* back at all costs.

Into the Sewers

The heroes have a little under twenty four hours to enter Timor and find the Hive Queen and the *Fang*. This is a timeless, nightmarish journey, where the heroes must trudge through the seemingly random maze of tunnels, beset by giant insects, slime, foul gas, fetid water – and, of course, ever increasing numbers of marikith.

Refer to the Timor section in the introduction of this adventures, and to page 165 of the **Ravenloft Campaign Setting** for hints on running this scene. The PCs should feel completely alone, hunted and harried on all sides, and in terror for their lives. The tension is unrelenting until they reach the Hive Queen’s lair, and the limitless packs of marikith hunters will ensure their resources are almost exhausted when they do.

An Audience With the Queen

The Hive Queen’s lair is located at the base of an enormous downpipe, hundreds of meters long. All along its length, drains open into the downpipe, raining sewage and other filth over the Hive Queen’s chamber.

The lair is a revolting pit of slime and refuse, crawling with marikith. The only entrance big enough for the PCs to fit through (at ground level at least) is

thigh deep in brackish water. Opposite this foul lake is an island of garbage, gleaned by the marikith from all over Timor. Flotsam, stones, garbage, bones – anything that could conceivably be found in a sewer is piled haphazardly and cemented in place with offal and slime. It is here that the Hive Queen waits – with some unexpected captives.

The Queen has prepared for the culmination of the Blood Rite well. Her marikith are no longer prowling the streets of Paridon looking for victims, for, with the acquisition of the streetwalkers on Night Two, Jenny on Night Four and any PCs, these have already been acquired. The marikith have kidnapped half a dozen people, restrained them with castoff rope, and buried them in the Queen's island. Only their faces are visible above their putrescent prisons.

If the PCs are captured and imprisoned here, the marikith hunters seal them into the island too. Although the PCs can escape fairly easily (Escape Bonds DC 25, Strength DC 24), the area is full of marikith, who try to capture them again. The captives aren't fed, but neither do the marikith pay very much attention to them if they don't make too much noise or try to escape. The only indication that time passes in the lightless depths is the occasional tolling of Paridon's clock tower, which is clearly audible even at these depths. The Hive Queen only appears when the PCs' lights have been extinguished; the captives can hear some huge creature moving around on the island and in the water, but can't see her.

The Hive Queen only reveals herself to her captives when midnight on the Last Day approaches. The captives hear the now-familiar dragging noise of the Hive Queen's movement, and then a terrible shout of triumph. The Queen kindles a torch and leers down at her captives, tossing the *Fang of the Nosferatu*, which her marikith have just stolen from Bloody Jack, from hand to hand. The fiendish creature thrusts her face at her captives, brutishly weighing up which would make the best victim to complete the blood ritual.

Alternately, the PCs may have no contact with the Hive Queen until they enter her lair on the Last Day, having defeated Bloody Jack. Either way, the harried PCs must recover the *Fang of the Nosferatu* and prevent the Queen from murdering a sixth victim. Of course, in her lair, surrounded by marikith hunters, the Queen is probably too powerful for the PCs to overwhelm, but fortunately all they really need to do is disarm her or rescue the captives. They could simply kill all the captives, but such wanton murder is obviously worthy of a Powers check and in Timor any evil act is cause for the character to begin transforming into a marikith.

Marikith Hunter (20): CR 2; Medium-sized aberration; HD 3d8+3; hp 16; Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft. climb 20 ft.; AC 17 (+4 Dex, +3 natural); Atk 2 claws +5 melee (1d4+3), bite +0 melee (2d4+3); SA Voice mimicry; SQ

Compression, darkvision 120 ft, immunities, light sensitivity; AL LE; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 19, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 5.

Skills and Feats: Escape Artist +16, Hide +12, Listen +6, Move Silently +12, Spot +4; Improved Initiative.

At midnight, the sound of clocks striking the hour reverberates down the enormous pipe. If she has not yet killed a sixth victim, the Hive Queen gives a howling laugh.

'Fools!' the bloated creature shrieks. 'You have accomplished nothing! Tomorrow I will begin the ritual again, by killing one of you each night. I *will* be all-powerful!'

A black tide of marikith – more than you could imagine existed – begins flooding into the chamber. It seems you have reached the end of your quest...

As the Hive Queen and her brood start to close in, however, a dreadful sucking noise fills the chamber. A whirlpool, lit with an eerie green light, swirls into existence in the center of the lair. Even if the PCs don't realize that this manifestation of the Mists is their only hope of escape, the Queen does. She shrieks for her brood to stop them! Stop them and take the *Fang*!

The heroes must dash to the center of the chamber and hurl themselves into the whirlpool. To do so, they must fight their way past a group of marikith (one for each PC). Each round that they delay, another two appear to slow them further. If they (and any rescued NPCs) reach the vortex, they are transported out of Zherisia. If not, they have failed in their mission. One by one they die far from light and purity and all of Paridon is doomed. Either way, it is the end of the adventure.

AFTERMATH

*To begin to live in the present,
we must first atone for our past. . .
and we can only atone for it by suffering,
by extraordinary, unceasing suffering.*

—Anton Chekhov
The Cherry Orchard (1904)

The Heroes Triumphant

If the heroes manage to escape the Queen with the *Fang of the Nosferatu*, Paridon is spared the worst of the marikith for another thirteen years. Life in the fog-bound city continues as normal – the doppelgangers continue to prey upon the humans, the *Newsbill* continues to sow the seeds of paranoia and mistrust, and the council ensures that food is distributed to the aristocracy before the starving masses. After a few days, Sodo reopens the borders and trade with the rest of Ravenloft resumes.

A few days later, the new coroner reopens Emil's offices to discover the morgue in complete disarray. The cool room door has been ripped off its hinges. Two of the bodies – Bloody Jack and Emil Bollenbach – are missing and all of Emil's journals are gone. Precisely what happened is up to individual DMs. Emil may still be trapped in the golem's body, to trouble the PCs later as both mad scientist and creation, or he may find a way to reanimate his own body and return to it. Alternately, Emil may be truly dead, and someone else may have taken up the mantle of his research to and his madness.

Finally, the *Fang of the Nosferatu* may be stolen away by the Mists and returned to Sodo (or some other random location) or the PCs may be allowed to keep it. Bearing in mind that the *Fang* is a powerful evil artifact that silently beckons to all evil creatures around it, this may turn out to be far worse for the PCs, even if it saves Paridon from the Bloody Jack cycle.

The Hive Queen Triumphant

Once the Hive Queen completes the Blood Rite, she gains all of the powers of the *Fang of the Nosferatu*: SR 20, damage resistance 30/+5 and the ability to *polymorph* into a wolf or bat (although both these forms are grotesquely large and misshapen). Horrifyingly, this protection extends in a limited

fashion to her brood as well; all of her marikith hunters gain SR 10 and damage resistance 10/+1.

This new invulnerability gives the marikith hive a new lease on life; they set out to transform Paridon into a replica of the marikith's original home. They prowl the night in packs, breaking into homes and kidnapping or murdering everyone inside. The Paridoners, finally confronted with solid evidence that the shadow killers exist, retreat into their homes. Crippled with fear of both doppelgangers and marikith, they are easy prey for the packs. The Paridoners come to dread the setting of the sun as much as the most superstitious Barovians. The miasma of terror only feeds the marikith and makes them strong.

When the first wave of terror begins, Sodo tries to flee the city. As he expected, he is unable to leave Paridon. Terrified of surviving without his magical protection after being invulnerable for so long, he declares that if he is to die, so will everyone else. He closes the borders and refuses to open them again. Many doppelgangers, unable to escape, unable to kill Sodo due to his healing touch and hampered by the paranoia of the humans, are kidnapped by the marikith and transformed into hunters. With no food or trade, hundreds of humans starve and Paridonian society collapses.

Within a few years, Zherisia is a broken place. The humans are allowed to survive only to feed and entertain the hordes of marikith. Only a few doppelgangers escape, eking out a living amongst the ruins. As the time for the Hive Queen's second Blood Rite approaches, Sodo will undoubtedly rise from his despondent stupor and return to the struggle for the magical blade and its unholy power. But is it too little, too late?

APPENDIX ONE:

CREATURES

*There is no conception more fallacious
than the sense of coziness implied by
"Mother Nature".
Each species must strive to survive, and
that it will do,
by every means in its power, however
foul.*

—John Wyndham
The Midwich Cuckoos

Marikith Hunters

Merium-Size Aberration

Hit Dice: 3d8+3 (16 hp)

Initiative: +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)

Speed: 40 ft., climb 20 ft.

AC: 17 (+4 Dex, +3 natural)

Attacks: 2 claws +5 melee, bite +0 melee

Damage: Claw 1d4+3, bite 2d4+3

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft. / 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Voice mimicry

Special Qualities: Compression, darkvision 120 ft.,
immunities, light sensitivity

Saves: Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +5

Abilities: Str 16, Dex 19, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 5

Skills: Escape Artist +16, Hide +12, Listen +6, Move
Silently +12, Spot +4

Feats: Improved Initiative

Climate/Terrain: Underground (Timor)

Organization: Pair, pack (2–8) or swarm (2–20)

Challenge Rating: 2

Treasure: None

Alignment: Always lawful evil

Advancement: 4-5 HD (Medium-size)

The twisting tunnels of Timor are inhabited by a seemingly endless hive of marikith hunters, all serving a single marikith queen.

Marikith are hulking, hive-minded humanoids, their bodies covered in a rubbery, glistening black hide. Marikith bodies have no rigid structures beyond their chitinous fangs and talons; they maintain their shape by tightly inflating interlocking bladders with fluids. By compressing these bladders, a hunter can squeeze its body through tiny gaps such as barred windows or drainpipes. Marikith eyes glow a dull red, but they can veil their eyes with a special membrane, revealing the glow only moments before striking.

Combat

Marikith feed on their victims' fear as well as their flesh. Thus, marikith torment their prey before moving in for the kill. Outside their lightless hives, marikith operate in small packs. Within their realm, hunters attack in waves, starting with packs of two or three and increasing the number of marikith with every assault until foes are outnumbered by ten-to-one or more.

Voice Mimicry (Ex): Although marikith have no true language, hunters can mimic sounds to mislead or terrify others. They often imitate the cries of recent victims and can echo the comments of current prey. To fool a subject, a marikith hunter must make an opposed Bluff check (with an effective +8 racial bonus) against the subject's Listen check.

Compression (Ex): A marikith hunter can squeeze through any gap of at least 1 foot diameter as a free action while moving. It can squeeze through a 7–11 inch diameter gap as a move-equivalent action. It can pass through a 3–6 inch diameter gap as a full-round action. Marikith hunters cannot squeeze through gaps smaller than 3 inches across.

Immunities (Ex): Marikith hunters take half damage from bludgeoning weapons and are immune to all fear, horror and madness effects. All hunters are considered to be under the influence of their queen (see Chapter Three of the **Ravenloft Campaign Setting**).

Light Sensitivity (Ex): Marikith suffer a –1 penalty to attack rolls in candlelight or starlight, a –2 penalty in torchlight, and a –4 penalty in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Skills: Marikith hunters receive a +8 racial bonus to Escape Artist checks and a +4 racial bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks.

Dread Doppelgangers

Medium-Size Shapechanger

Hit Dice: 4d8+4 (22 hp)

Initiative: +1 (+1 Dex)

Speed: 30 ft.

AC: 17 (+1 Dex, +6 natural)

Attacks: 2 slams +5 melee

Damage: Slam 1d6+2

Face/Reach: 5 ft. by 5 ft. / 5 ft.

Special Attacks: Detect thoughts

Special Qualities: Alter self, glamor, immunities

Saves: Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +6

Abilities: Str 14, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 14

Skills: Bluff +12*, Disguise +12*, Listen +11, Sense Motive +6, Spot +8

Feats: Alertness, Dodge

Climate/Terrain: Any land and underground (Paridon)

Organization: Solitary, pair or clan (4–12)

Challenge Rating: 3

Treasure: Double standard

Alignment: Usually neutral evil

Advancement: By character class

Dread doppelgangers are malicious schemers that take on the shape of other humanoids. In natural form they are hairless, sexless humanoids with oily gray skin and long, gangly arms. Their cruel, twisted faces feature pointed ears framing an elongated face with evil, calculating eyes and a large, snarling mouth.

Dread doppelgangers usually work as a group, planning their actions days, sometimes years, in advance. A typical doppelganger scheme involves the methodical replacement of a merchant or noble house's family and servants over the course of months. Once in control, they either escape in the night with as much wealth as possible or live their lives in their assumed form for decades, ruling their stolen estates with surprising, if ruthless, wisdom.

Doppelgangers cannot reproduce among themselves, mating with humanoids of either sex among other races to produce offspring. They are generally reluctant to mate as females, however, because once a doppelganger is impregnated, it cannot change form until the child is born. A newborn always appears to be a healthy, adorable child of the same race as the true humanoid parent. At puberty, the shapechanging abilities slowly manifest and run amok for at least a year. A child abandoned by its doppelganger parent has little chance of survival.

Combat

When in its natural form, the dread doppelganger strikes with its powerful fists. It prefers not to attack with its fists if doing so will expose it. A dread doppelganger attacked publicly (if it feels the attack is

not life-threatening) prefers to be “killed” (feigning death) rather than risk exposure, trusting its family to arrange an escape from burial. When shaped as an armed person, it attacks with appropriate weapons.

Detect Thoughts (Su): A dread doppelganger can continuously *detect thoughts* as the spell cast by an 18th-level sorcerer (save DC 14). It can suppress or resume this ability as a free action.

Alter Self (Su): A doppelganger can assume the shape of any Small or Medium-size humanoid. This works like *alter self* as cast by an 18th-level sorcerer, but the doppelganger can remain in the chosen form indefinitely. It can assume a new form or return to its own form as a standard action.

Glamor (Su): A dread doppelganger can alter the texture and appearance of objects on its person as a free action. A doppelganger cannot change the objects' basic material (cloth remains cloth, metal remains metal, etc.), but a doppelganger could turn threadbare rags into clothes of any fashion, or turn a bit of wire into a necklace or visa versa. Doppelgangers often carry assorted knickknacks in their pockets to use for this purpose. Objects automatically revert to their true form if separated from the doppelganger by 5 feet or more.

Immunities (Ex): Dread doppelgangers are immune to sleep and charm effects.

Skills: A doppelganger receives a +4 racial bonus to Bluff and Disguise checks. * When using *alter self*, a doppelganger receives an additional +10 circumstance bonus to Disguise checks. If it can read an opponent's mind, it receives an additional +4 to Bluff and Disguise checks.

APPENDIX TWO:

CHARACTERS

*Perhaps those who, trembling most,
maintain a dignity in their fate, are the
bravest:
resolution on reflection is real courage.*

—Horace Walpole

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Bloody Jack

Bloody Jack: Improved doppelganger (flesh) golem, Rog5, CR 10; Medium-size construct; HD 4d10+5d6; hp 33; Init +8 (Improved Initiative, +4 Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 24 (+4 Dex, +10 natural); Atk 2 slams +11 melee (slam 1d6+5) or +15/+10 melee (1d4+8, *dagger* +3); SA sneak attack +3d6; SD construct, damage reduction 15/+1, alter self, evasion, uncanny dodge; AL LN; SV Fort +2, Ref +9, Will +4; Str 20 (+5), Dex 18 (+4), Con –, Int 7* (–2), Wis 14* (+2), Cha 1* (–5). Height: 7'

Skills and Feats (core personality): Bluff +3, Hide +12, Listen +10, Move Silently +12, Search +6, Spot +10; Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (*dagger*).

As Dr. Burton: Appraise +7, Bluff +8, Diplomacy +5, Heal +9, Hide +12, Knowledge (local) +9, Listen +10, Move Silently +12, Profession (herbalist) +9, Search +10, Sense Motive +9, Spot +10.

As Montague Rhodes: Bluff +11, Diplomacy +10, Gather Information +5, Hide +12, Innuendo +5, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (local) +8, Listen +9, Move Silently +12, Search +9, Sense Motive +6, Spot +9.

As the Scarlet Woman: Bluff +10, Hide +12, Innuendo +3, Listen +10, Move Silently +12, Perform (seduction) +4, Search +8, Sense Motive +3, Spot +10.

As Edward Chaswick (if brain is consumed): Bluff +10, Concentration +5, Diplomacy +9, Heal +7, Hide +12, Knowledge (religion) +13, Listen +11, Move Silently +12, Perform (hymns) +5, Search +11, Sense Motive +6, Spot +11.

As Emil Bollenbach: Alchemy +9, Bluff +8, Craft (leatherworking) +9, Heal +9; Hide +12, Knowledge (created lore) +9, Knowledge (electricity) +9, Knowledge (shapechanger lore) +6, Listen +11, Move Silently +12, Profession (herbalist) +8, Search +12, Spot +11.

Bloody Jack is a golem built from the flesh of doppelgangers. When in its natural state, the golem is a sexless humanoid with rubbery, ash-gray skin, sunken eyes, pointed ears and needle-sharp fangs. Heavy suture marks cover its patchwork body.

Background

Bloody Jack was built by Emil Bollenbach on behalf of the doppelganger lord of Paridon, using the flesh of doppelgangers that had recently displeased Sodo. Needless to say, they were unwilling participants in Sodo's master scheme.

The golem's sole purpose in existence is murder. As an emotionless construct, it is not troubled by the *Fang of the Nosferatu*'s insistent cries for blood or the pain that the magical blade channels into its wielder. However, something deep within the golem cries out with bloodlust all the same.

Combat

Special Attacks: *Sneak Attack (Ex)*—whenever Jack's target is denied Dex bonus to AC, Jack can inflict an extra 3d6 points of damage with a successful strike.

Special Qualities: *Alter Self (Su)*—If Jack kills a humanoid victim, the golem immediately transforms to take on the appearance of its victim. Jack transforms one limb at a time, at the rate of one limb a round (thus, it takes six rounds to complete the transformation). Jack can continue to perform actions during this minute, but the transformation does reveal Jack's true form: a hulking flesh golem stitched together from doppelganger limbs. Jack can mimic the clothing and gear of his victims in the manner of a dread doppelganger.

Jack will devour the brain of its slain victims unless prevented. Jack can eat a brain in one minute (ten full-round actions); if it completes the process, Jack's mental ability scores rise to match those of the victim (if the victim's scores are higher), and Jack gains access to all of the victim's skill ranks. Jack's skill ranks and the victim's overlap; they do not stack.

Jack retains the victim's memories and personality until the next time it kills a victim and changes shape.

Construct (Ex)—Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, *sleep*, paralysis, stunning, disease, death effects, and necromantic effects. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, ability drain, or energy drain. Immune to all effects that require a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects). Not at risk of death from massive damage, but is immediately destroyed if reduced to 0 hp or less. Jack cannot be *raised* or *resurrected*, but unless the body is completely consumed by acid or fire, it can be brought back to life with a jolt of electricity.

Magic Immunity (Ex)—Immune to all spells, spell-like abilities and supernatural effects except as follows: Fire- and cold-based effects *slow* Jack for 2d6 rounds, with no saving throw. An electricity effect breaks any *slow* effect on Jack and cures 1 point of damage for each 3 points it would otherwise inflict. Jack rolls no saving throw against electrical effects.

Possessions: *Fang of the Nosferatu*.

Emil Bollenbach (Dr. Thomas Cream)

Emil Bollenbach: Male human Exp3; CR 3; Medium-size humanoid; HD 3d6; hp 10; Init +3 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+3 Dex); Atk +5 melee (1d3+1/19–20, scalpel); SA switch personality; SD switch personality; AL LE; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +6; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 11. Height: 5'6"

Skills and Feats: Alchemy +9, Bluff +5, Craft (leatherworking) +10, Heal +13; Knowledge (created lore) +12, Knowledge (electricity) +10, Knowledge (shapechanger lore) +7, Listen +5, Profession (herbalist) +8, Search +10, Spot +9; Skill Focus (created lore), Skill Focus (heal), Weapon Finesse (scalpel).

Languages: Darkonese*, Balok, Lamordian, Mordentish, Zherisian

Possessions: 10,000 gp in gems.

Emil Bollenbach is a short, delicate looking man who seems physically incapable of the terrible crimes he has perpetrated. His hair has been dyed black from its natural red, and he has adopted a Zherisian name in order to blend in with his new surroundings, but his basic nature remains the same. A nervous tick draws up one side of his mouth. His eyes gleam with intensity. Even when relaxed, he seems distracted and twitchy; he never stops moving or muttering to himself, and often laughs for no reason. His strangest habit is constantly uttering perversions of common sayings.

Background

Twenty years ago, Emil Bollenbach was a gifted student of medicine in Darkon. He attended a lecture by Dr. Rudolph van Richten on the subject of golems. The subject fascinated the student and he volunteered

to help van Richten study, track and destroy the evil constructs.

For two years, Emil divided his time between his studies and assisting van Richten in his hunts. Then, one night, they tracked a series of murders to the medical school Bollenbach was attending and the young man discovered that one of his professors was actually a madman building a flesh golem. Worse yet, that golem had the head of one of Emil's close friends, who had vanished a few months earlier. Bollenbach's mind snapped and he fled screaming from the scene, apparently perishing when the mad doctor's lab exploded into flame.

However, Emil was not dead. Unbalanced by his horrific experience, he decided that only another golem could defeat the creations that madmen were building throughout the land. Unaware of the irony, he spent the next twenty years building golem after golem, trying to find the perfect creation that could destroy every other golem in Ravenloft. During this time, he learned of the race of dread doppelgangers and was contacted by Sodo, who offered him all the alchemical, technological and physical resources of his city if the scientist would build him a super golem that he could use for a week. Confident that he could use a secure base and unlimited resources to finally build the perfect golem, Emil agreed. Even after twenty years of failure, he still believes that he is the only person with the necessary vision and genius to destroy the Created.

Combat

Emil invariably tries to flee if confronted, although he tells himself this is due to prudence rather than cowardice. He always carries 10,000 gp in gems so that if forced to flee he can rebuild somewhere else.

Special Defenses: *Switch Personality (Su)*—If Emil is cornered or killed near one of his creations that have not yet been brought to life, Emil is able to transfer his essence into its body. He is also able to do this to Bloody Jack due to the golem's uniquely malleable personality. Bollenbach is then trapped in the golem's body for thirteen hours while his own body lies in a coma. If his body is killed during this time, Emil is trapped in his creation forever.

Emil has no control over the manifestation of this power.

Sorjan and Luda

Sorjan and Luda: Dread doppelgangers Rog4; CR 7; Medium-size shapechanger; HD 4d8+4d6+8; hp 44; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+1 Dex, +6 natural); Atk 2 slams +4 melee (1d6+1 slam), or +4 melee (1d4+1, dagger); SA Sneak attack +2d6, detect thoughts; SQ Alter self, glamor, evasion, immunities, uncanny dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +7; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 14. Height: 6'

Skills and Feats: Balance +7, Bluff +14*, Climb +7, Disguise +14*, Forgery +7, Listen +11, Move

Silently +8, Sense Motive +8, Spot +8; Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative.

Languages: Zherisian*

Possessions: *Timed scarab of death, keen dagger.*

Sorjan and Luda are, in many ways, typical dread doppelgangers. In their natural forms, they are sexless humanoids with oily gray skin, long, gangly arms and faces that eloquently express their selfish and malicious natures. Of course, those who see their true forms are unlikely to have the opportunity to tell others. Sorjan and Luda are both skilled in the art of assassination, and won't hesitate to kill anyone who could either reveal their true nature or otherwise endanger their lives.

Background

Sorjan and Luda are both members of the Akar clan of doppelgangers. Paridon's doppelganger society is highly hierarchical, with each clan jostling for the position that will bring its members the easiest lives with the least danger. The Akar is one of the minor clans; they only have uncontested access to the most menial of roles, and have a standard of living only slightly higher than most of Paridon's human inhabitants.

To remedy this situation, the Akar clan volunteered to help Sodo complete this cycle of murders, hoping that the darklord will show his thanks by elevating them in the hierarchy of clans. For his part, Sodo is happy to work with a minor clan, knowing that they are less likely to turn on him as the wealthy Mulor clan did last cycle. In this, at least, he has chosen well; Sorjan and Luda are both terrified of Sodo, and constantly aware of what will happen to them and their clan if they fail. Like any doppelganger, they are sadistic, duplicitous and opportunistic, but fear makes them loyal as well. They are fully prepared to die for their cause, knowing that Sodo may bring them back from the dead if they please him, but can torture them to death over and over if they fail.

Combat

Like all doppelgangers, Sorjan and Luda prefer to avoid combat whenever possible, and only attack when they are sure they have some kind of advantage. Their primary weapons are deceit and psychology; they keep their wickedly sharp daggers at hand only for true emergencies.

Special Attacks: *Detect Thoughts (Su):* A dread doppelganger can continuously *detect thoughts* as the spell cast by an 18th-level sorcerer (save DC 14). It can suppress or resume this ability as a free action.

Special Qualities: *Alter Self (Su):* A doppelganger can assume the shape of any Small or Medium-size humanoid. This works like *alter self* as cast by an 18th-level sorcerer, but the doppelganger can remain in the chosen form indefinitely. It can assume a new form or return to its own form as a standard action.

Glamer(Su): A dread doppelganger can alter the texture and appearance of objects on its person as a

free action. A doppelganger cannot change the objects' basic material (cloth remains cloth, metal remains metal, etc.), but a doppelganger could turn threadbare rags into clothes of any fashion, or turn a bit of wire into a necklace or visa versa. Doppelgangers often carry assorted knickknacks in their pockets to use for this purpose. Objects automatically revert to their true form if separated from the doppelganger by 5 feet or more.

Immunities (Ex): Dread doppelgangers are immune to sleep and charm effects.

Chief Constable Inspector James Wortle

Inspector Wortle: Male human War6/Fgt1; CR 6; Medium-size humanoid; HD 6d8+1d10+14; hp 48; Init +0 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+6 +1 *chain mail*); Atk +9/+4 melee (1d6+1 shortsword), +7/+2 missile (1d10 pistol); AL LG; SV Fort +9, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 12. Height: 5'10"

Skills and Feats: Climb +2, Diplomacy +6, Gather Information +8, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (local) +6, Listen +6, Sense Motive +8, Spot +6; Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (firearms), Skill Focus (Gather Information), Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Weapon Focus (shortsword).

Languages: Zherisian*, one spoken by the PCs.

Possessions: Pistol, +1 *chain mail of light fortification*, shortsword, magnifying glass.

James Wortle is a large, run-down looking man who has seen almost every kind of cruelty and crime in his thirty years in the guard. The horror of the sights he has seen and the stress of his position has led him to drink, a fact abundantly clear in his cheery red nose (which has been broken in numerous fights) and cheeks. Thick purple rings under his bloodshot eyes suggest he hasn't slept well in weeks. If he has slept, he obviously did so in his clothes. He is a man on the edge of a breakdown.

Background

Forty-three years ago, Wortle was born to a poor family of common laborers. Even from an early age, he wanted to join the guard. At the age of thirteen, he carried messages between guard stations, and became a full constable three years later.

Being of common birth stymied Wortle's chances of advancement in Paridon's class-based society; he remained a constable until the end of Bloody Jack's last cycle, and was present when Inspector Andrew Logan, the Chief Constable of that time, was unmasked as a doppelganger. The revelation that doppelgangers lived in Paridon cut Wortle to the quick. He truly believes in the glory of Paridon and the importance of the city guard, and despises the fact that doppelgangers adulterate and take advantage of both. He was driven to succeed and rose quickly through the

ranks by his dogged pursuit of criminals and a surprising degree of political savvy.

Wortle has finally reached a position where he feels he can truly deal with the doppelganger problem, but he has found that doppelgangers are the least of his problems. The office of Chief Constable is traditionally held by an aristocrat who understands that the guard's justice doesn't apply to the nobility, and the City Council knows that Wortle doesn't think that way. Provoked by subtle prods from the doppelgangers, the Council has been looking for an excuse to remove Wortle from office. So far, his exemplary work has prevented them from doing so, but it is only a matter of time.

Wortle is under immense pressure to capture Bloody Jack. Not only would it be an immense victory for the humans over their doppelganger parasites, but Wortle knows that one mistake and he will lose his job.

Inspector Francine Maxwell

Inspector Maxwell: Female human War4; CR 3; Medium-sized humanoid; HD 4d8+4; hp 25; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 chain mail); Atk +9 melee (+1 rapier 1d6+3), +5 missile (1d8 light crossbow); AL LG; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 14. Height 5'8".

Skills and Feats: Diplomacy +3, Gather Information +4, Knowledge (local) +2, Search +3, Sense Motive +4, Spot +3; Alertness, Skill focus (Sense Motive), Weapon Finesse (rapier).

Languages: Zherisian*

Possessions: Light crossbow, +1 rapier, chain mail, magnifying glass.

Inspector Francine Maxwell is a muscular woman. Her physical bulk lends her an imposing presence, as does the tight bun she uses to contain her mouse-brown hair. She is meticulously careful, even somewhat timid, in her work, especially in regards to the Bloody Jack murders. She has had very little experience with doppelgangers and knows little about them save gossip and their legendary ability for deceit. As such, she prefers to overestimate rather than underestimate them; she is fully prepared to imprison innocents for the entire murder cycle if it will help her capture Bloody Jack. Although she shares Wortle's belief in the impartiality and importance of justice and greatly respects her superior, her ambition has been awakened by rumors of his unsteady position. Maxwell dreams of capturing Bloody Jack and becoming the first female Chief Constable.

Edward Chaswick

Edward Chaswick: Male human Clr7; CR 7; Medium-size humanoid; HD 7d8+14; hp 49; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+2 Dex, +4 chain shirt); Atk +7 melee (1d6+3 +1 rapier); AL LN; SV Fort +9, Ref

+4, Will +10; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 15. Height: 6'2"

Skills and Feats: Concentration +9, Diplomacy +9, Heal +10, Knowledge (local) +7, Knowledge (religion) +13, Perform (hymns) +6, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +10; Expertise, Great Fortitude, Improved Disarm, Iron Will.

Languages: Zherisian*, Elven.

Spells: detect poison, guidance (3), read magic (2); comprehend languages, entropic shield, protection from evil, remove fear, sanctuary; bull's strength, calm emotions, shield other, zone of truth; daylight, magic circle against evil, magic vestment; freedom of movement, tongues.

Domains: Law, Strength

Possessions: +1 rapier, chain shirt, ring of mind shielding.

Edward Chaswick is a tall, slender man in his fifties, although he retains the vigor of a much younger man due to the extensive physical and mental exercises the Divinity of Mankind requires from all of its members. His graying hair is long, framing his distinguished face. He seems the perfect example of Paridon's kindly, respectable clergy.

Background

Edward first entered the Temple of the Divine Form as a member of the choir. His skill at public speaking, melodious voice, and passionate belief in redemption and perfection resulted in his quick promotion to missionary work in Paridon's poorer areas.

Edward's eyes were opened to the horror of doppelgangers during the last cycle, when Bloody Jack murdered one of the young women Edward was trying to save. With the help of a group of foreign adventurers and like-minded Paridoners, he discovered the city's terrible parasites. At first, he was horrified at the perverse and evil reflections of humanity's perfection, but gradually came to believe that they could and should be saved. Edward founded the Philosophy of Humanity to do just that and devoted his life to researching the sadistic creatures. He believes that he has discovered a mystic ritual that will trap doppelgangers in human form, and set them on the path to salvation. He hopes to make Bloody Jack his first true success, convinced that redeeming Paridon's most feared murderer will prove to the rest of the city that his sect's theories are more than the ramblings of madmen and naïve bleeding hearts. Now so close to achieving his goal of the last twelve years, Edward's obsession is beginning to blind him to the deadly danger that he faces.

Jenny

Jenny: Female human Com1; CR 1/3; Medium-size humanoid; HD 1d4; hp 2; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (+1 Dex); Atk +0 melee (1d3 subdual, unarmed

strike); AL NG; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 14. Height: 5'6"
Skills and Feats: Craft (tinkering) +7, Diplomacy +4, Knowledge (local) +1, Listen +5, Spot +5; Alertness, Skill Focus (tinkering).

Languages: Zherisian*, one known by the heroes
Possessions: Materials for 2d4 tinderboxes.

Jenny has been struggling with poverty for all of her twenty years of life. Her father, Philip lost both his legs in an accident while using a mechanical loom at the weaving factory where he worked, leaving his foreign wife and Jenny to support them. Since her mother died four years ago from the coughing sickness, Jenny's odd jobs have been the family's sole means of support. She is willing to try her hand at any respectable task, and regularly sells tinderboxes, made from goods she scavenges from the streets. She spends every daylight hour trying to earn enough money to support herself and her father.

Jenny is almost painfully thin; most of the money she earns goes to supporting her father rather than feeding herself. She is quite attractive, with blond curly hair, intelligent blue eyes and an endearing accent. She wears a well-worn and lovingly patched gray dress, which covers her from neck to ankles, and always carries a large straw hat and a wicker basket, where she puts any materials she finds for her tinderboxes.

Jenny is cheery and curious; poverty has not blunted her enthusiasm for life in the way that it has soured many women in her position. Due to her mother's influence, she is not as bound by Paridon's strict moral code as strongly as most, and is quite daring and adventurous. She speaks her mother's native tongue, which, by coincidence, is a language shared by most of the PCs.

Sodo, Darklord of Paridon

Male dread doppelganger Rog1: CR 5; Medium-size shapechanger; HD 4d8+12 plus 1d6+3; hp 40; Init +8 (+4 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd. 30 ft.; AC 18 (touch 14, flat-footed 14); Atk +8 melee (1d6+4, slam); SA Detect thoughts, sneak attack +1d6, soothing touch; SQ Damage reduction 30/+5**, darkvision 60 ft., flickering form, immune to sleep and charm effects; SR 20**; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +10, Will +7; Str 19, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 17, Cha 10. Height varies between 4 ft. and 8 ft.

Skills and Feats: Appraise +8, Bluff +16***, Climb +6, Diplomacy +4, Disable Device +8, Disguise +12***, Escape Artist +8, Gather Information +4, Hide +8, Intimidate +6, Listen +15, Move Silently +10, Sense Motive +17, Spot +10, Use Magic Device +4; Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Skill Focus (Intimidate, Move Silently), Weapon Focus (unarmed strike).

Languages: Zherisian*, Draconic
** Granted by the *Fang of the Nosferatu*

*** If Sodo can read an opponent's mind, he receives a +4 circumstance bonus to Bluff and Disguise checks.

Sodo is a dread doppelganger, a shapeshifting creature with the ability to mimic the form of any Small or Medium-size humanoid. Due to his darklord's curse, however, he cannot maintain any form for more than a few moments. When he is calm and relaxed, Sodo can maintain a single shape for up to a minute. As he becomes more agitated or excited, however, he changes shape with increasing frequency. When truly angered or feeding on the fear of his victims, he flits from shape to shape every few seconds. His involuntary changes are often only partial (such as the head of a schoolgirl momentarily appearing atop the body of a frail old man), and frequently include bestial or monstrous forms. From witness descriptions, the Paridon *Newsbill* has taken to calling this "bogeyman of the unsound" the Flickerflame.

Background

Sodo was once an insignificant but ambitious member of the Mular doppelganger clan on a distant outlander world. One by one, he murdered all the doppelgangers in his clan older than himself through a carefully staged series of "accidents." With all the elders dead, he then murdered the clan leader and assumed his identity. Although doppelgangers are unable to use their natural abilities to mimic other doppelgangers, Sodo used a *hat of disguise* to complete the illusion.

The Mists responded to Sodo's treachery by drawing him and the Zherisian city of Paridon into Ravenloft. The Dark Powers granted Sodo the ability to assume the form of any Small or Medium-sized humanoid, monstrous humanoid, or even man-shaped creatures of other types, including other doppelgangers. At the same time, he was cursed to be unable to maintain a single shape for more than a few moments at a time, and to heal the victims he seeks to harm.

Soon after becoming the darklord of Paridon (then called Zherisia), Sodo acquired the *Fang of the Nosferatu* (see pg. XX). Since that time, Paridon has been repeatedly stalked by a brutal and mysterious killer popularly known as "Bloody Jack." Bloody Jack would murder six victims at the stroke of midnight on six consecutive nights, then vanish for another 13 years. These killings are committed to fulfill the *Fang's* blood rite, granting Sodo effective immortality and near-invulnerability. Jack's exact *modus operandi* changes with each cycle; sometimes he mutilates his victims in a particular way, while in the next cycle he might target a specific type of victim. Since Sodo has trouble wielding weapons (see below), he recruits a new doppelganger each time to commit the murders for him.

Thirteen years ago, Sodo's chosen proxy, a doppelganger living as Sir Edmund Bloodsworth, attempted to steal the *Fang's* power for himself and

overthrow Sodo's role as the undisputed leader of the clans. Sodo narrowly defeated Bloodsworth, but the existence of doppelgangers was revealed.

Current Sketch

The time has come for Bloody Jack's 14th cycle of murders. Sodo has taken measures to ensure the loyalty of his proxy this time, intent on avoiding a repeat of the last cycle's near-disaster. However, he must now contend with a new complication. Eleven years ago, the domain of Timor joined Paridon, forcing Sodo out of the sewers he had called home for so long. Sinister creatures have emerged from the tunnels beneath Paridon to join the doppelgangers in preying on its people. These creatures are marikith, though *Newsbill* headlines call them "Shadow Killers." Sodo has studied these interlopers for a decade. Although individual marikith are creatures of dim intelligence and base cunning, Sodo has seen enough to learn that they all obey a single, much greater intelligence that remains hidden deep within Timor. Sodo is not yet sure what to do if this monstrous Hive Queen decides to follow in Sir Edmund's footsteps.

Combat

Sodo is addicted to the fear and pain he draws from his victims. He must experience these emotions at least once every 5 days or he suffers intense pain himself. Sodo must touch his victims to feed on their terror. In the passion of the moment, Sodo's shape transforms so quickly that he has difficulty aiming weapons, suffering a -4 circumstance penalty to attack rolls. For that reason, he prefers to latch on to his victims and choke them to death. (A standard grapple attack, inflicting grapple damage.)

Special Attacks: *Soothing Touch (Su):* Sodo's touch eases pain, heals wounds, and even restores life to the dead. Sodo cannot suppress this ability, much to his disgust. Any living creature Sodo touches is affected as if by a *regenerate* spell, except that the subject continues to heal 1 hit point per round until all hit point damage has been healed. If Sodo touches an inanimate corpse (including a victim he has just strangled), his touch carries the effects of a *resurrection* spell as cast by a 12th-level cleric. Although Sodo's touch heals physical wounds, it does little to alleviate the terror of his victims. If a victim is killed by Sodo and then returns to life, she must make a Madness check (DC 20) the moment she revives.

Special Qualities: *Flickering Form (Su):* Anyone who sees Sodo's rapidly mutating body must make an immediate Horror save (DC 13). This is considered a gaze attack and has a range of 30 feet.

Lair

Sodo has no true lair. Before Timor attached itself to Paridon, Sodo usually lurked in the city's extensive sewers. Those tunnels fell within Timor's borders, however, forever shunning him. Sodo now frequently slips from one safe house to another, always under

cover of night. These safe houses are typically abandoned properties or owned by members of the dread doppelganger clans infesting the city.

Closing the Borders

When Sodo wishes to close his domain, travelers who enter the Misty Border soon find themselves wandering back into Paridon's winding alleyways. Sodo cannot close the border his domain shares with Timor, however, much to his dismay. Those dank tunnels offer no escape, however, as they simply descend into the realm of the marikith and their monstrous Hive Queen.

The Hive Queen, Darklord of Timor

The Hive Queen: Female marikith queen, CR 14; Huge aberration; HD 13d8+65; hp 127; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 20 (-2 size, +1 Dex, +11 natural); Atk 1 bite +12 melee (2d8+8 and poison), 1 sting +12 melee (1d8+4 and poison) and either 4 claws +17 melee (2d4+8) or 3 claws +17 melee (2d4+8) and +12 (1d4+11 *dagger* +3); SA Improved grab, poison; SD darkvision 120 ft., hive mind, light sensitivity, voice mimicry; SR 15; AL CE; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 26, Dex 12, Con 20, Int 20, Wis 11, Cha 17. Height: 16' long.

Skills and Feats: Balance +9, Climb +18, Gather Information +9, Hide +5, Intimidate +11, Jump +16, Listen +7, Move Silently +8, Search +11, Spellcraft +6, Spot +8; Alertness, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Cleave, Improved Grab, Lightning Reflexes, Multidexterity, Power Attack.

Languages: Timorese*, Draconic, Zherisian

The Hive Queen is a swollen spider-like nightmare standing fully 11 feet tall. A mostly humanoid torso, equipped with four ape-like arms, extends from a bloated arachnid abdomen that ends in a gigantic poisonous sting and is supported by four filth-covered legs. Her hide is a glistening jet black, mottled with venomous red and orange splotches. Thin, muddy hair hangs around her hideous face like an oily corona. Long, dripping fangs protrude from her too-wide mouth. Her eyes glow a malevolent red. Simply catching sight of this terrible creature is enough to drive the staunchest soul to madness.

Background

More than a century ago, the human woman who would become the Hive Queen was heir to a royal house. Her mother, the queen of the original and of Timor, was obsessed with creating a city more magnificent than any other. She taxed her citizens into starvation and poverty, and when they could no longer afford her extravagant plans, she made a pact with an evil wizard to force them to obey her through fear. No one noticed the mists slowly collecting around the beautiful city of Timor.

The young princess was aware of the suffering of her people, but felt no sympathy for them. She blamed the peasants for not being capable of supporting her mother's insane dreams and blamed her mother for driving the kingdom to the brink of bankruptcy. She decided that the city of Timor deserved a more suitable ruler, and began to formulate a terrible plan to gain control of the throne.

The princess knew that her mother was terrified of the marikith, a fierce predator native to their world. She decided to seduce one of the court wizards, and to turn her mother's tricks against her. The wizard agreed to cast an illusion that would make her appear to her mother as a marikith queen, in the hope that the aging ruler's heart would fail. The coup was to take place on the night of the Royal Ball in the new palace, celebrating the completion of the grand city.

Before the ball, the princess had a secret rendezvous with her real lover – and was seen by the wizard. The spellcaster was consumed by humiliation and rage and decided to take revenge.

At the height of the festivities, the wizard cast his spell upon the princess as she stood before her mother. The Ball erupted into chaos as she transformed into a creature a thousand times more hideous than a normal marikith queen. Her mother collapsed.

Just as the Hive Queen was glorying in the fear she had spawned in her mother and the guests, the wizard triumphantly announced that her new form was no illusion; she was now as hideous on the outside and on the inside. Overcome with rage, the terrible creature killed the wizard and stormed murderously through the city, harried here and there by the city guards, led by her lover. When she reached the edge of the city, she found an impenetrable wall of mist blocking her escape. In a rage she turned on her pursuers, tearing them to pieces, until they finally overcame her and drove her into the sewers.

The Hive Queen ruled the beautiful city of Timor from the sewers for more than 120 years. The once-cosmopolitan city dwindled into a mere handful of humans, clustered together in terror of the marikith and the murderous doppelgangers that shared their city. From the dark heart of her domain, the Hive Queen controlled every aspect of life in Timor, and grew fat upon the fear her minions inspired. She was always careful to destroy any queen egg that she laid, wary of being replaced as she had replaced her mother.

The Hive Queen was just preparing to destroy her latest queen egg when a sudden shock ran through her domain. For the first time in decades, she loped ponderously to the surface, where her marikith reported a bustling city, full of life and empty of fear. The year was 744 BC; Timor had fused with Paridon. The Hive Queen immediately began trying to recreate her paradise of terror with Paridon, only to be confounded on every side by Sodo and the doppelgangers. For the first time, the Hive Queen found an enemy so evenly matched that neither was able to gain an advantage. Then she began to hear the

seductive whispers of the *Fang of the Nosferatu* in her mind, promising to grant her the power she had lost if she could wrest it from Sodo's grip. She retreated to her lair to plan for the approaching battle – only to find her long forgotten egg had hatched.

Current Sketch

The Hive Queen is mortally ashamed of her grotesque appearance, but her desire to return to her former beauty through any means necessary pales into insignificance compared to her obsession with power. Her desire to control every aspect of her subjects' lives goes far beyond even normal madness, dominating every thought and moment of her time. The unwavering devotion of the marikith salves her insanity to some extent, but she is terrified that even they will abandon her eventually, if another queen should ever arise to challenge her. Only one queen egg has ever managed to escape destruction at her hands, and try as she might, she has never been able to find her hatchling. She is afraid that the marikith have already started to turn against her, and are hiding the new queen from her.

Combat

The Hive Queen is largely a coward, despite her phenomenal skill in combat. She only ever attacks when assisted by a horde of marikith, and tends to flee at the first sign events are going against her. She doesn't hesitate to sacrifice all of her guards if it will allow her to escape.

Special Attacks: Poison (Ex): The Hive Queen carries different venom in her bite and in her stinging abdomen.

Bite: Fortitude save (DC 20); initial damage 2d6 temporary Constitution, secondary damage 1d6 temporary Constitution.

Sting: Fortitude save (DC 20); initial damage none, secondary damage paralysis for 1 week. During that week, a humanoid victim slowly transforms into a marikith hunter. If the poison is neutralized before the change is complete, transformation reverses itself.

Special Qualities: Hive Mind (Su): The Hive Queen can communicate telepathically with any of her brood within Timor.

Light Sensitivity (Ex): Like all marikith, the Hive Queen suffers a –1 penalty to attack rolls in candlelight or starlight, a –2 penalty in torchlight, and a –4 penalty in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Voice Mimicry (Ex): The Hive Queen can imitate almost any imaginable sound to mislead or terrify others. To fool a subject, the Hive Queen must make an opposed Bluff check (with an effective +8 racial bonus) against the subject's Listen check.

Lair

The Hive Queen is equally at home anywhere in Timor, roaming from sewer to sewer as the whim takes her. She currently makes her home at the bottom of an

enormous drainpipe, on a revolting island of compacted sewage and other refuse.

Closing the Borders

When the Hive Queen closes Timor's borders, thick, paralytic gas fills the tunnels just below the street level. Anyone entering these noxious clouds is instantly paralyzed, with no saving throw. They remain paralyzed for 1d6 minutes after the Hive Queen reopens the borders. By the victims recover their faculties, the marikith have returned to claim them...

Supporting Characters

Constables of the City Guard

Constable: Human War1; CR 1; Medium-sized humanoid; HD 1d8+1, hp 5; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather); Atk +2 melee (1d6+1 club); AL Varies; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Gather Information +3, Knowledge (local) +1, Listen +2, Sense Motive +3, Spot +3; Alertness, Skill focus (Sense Motive).

Possessions: Studded leather armor, club, whistle.

Officers of the City Guard

Officer: Human War3; CR 3; Medium-sized humanoid; HD 3d8+3; hp 21; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather); Atk +5 melee (1d6+2 club); AL Varies; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 14, Ref 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Gather Information +4, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (local) +3, Listen +3, Search +2, Sense Motive +4, Spot +3; Alertness, Skill focus (Gather Information), Skill focus (Sense Motive).

Possessions: Studded leather armor, club, whistle.

Clergy of the Divine Form

Clergy: Human Clr6; CR 6; Medium-sized humanoids; HD 6d8+12; hp 42; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC ; Atk Unarmed strike +6 (1d3+1 subdual); SA Spells, turn undead; AL ; SV Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +8; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 10.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +6, Diplomacy +6, Heal +7, Knowledge (shapechanger lore) +5, Knowledge (local or religion) +5, Sense Motive +7, Spellcraft +4; Improved Unarmed Strike, Skill Focus (Sense Motive), Still Spell, Weapon Focus (unarmed strike).

Spells (5/4+1/4+1/1+1): Cure minor wounds, detect magic, guidance (2), resistance, bless, command, cure light wounds, sanctuary; aid, cure moderate wounds, hold person, spiritual weapon; prayer. Note this list doesn't include domain spells.

Domains: 2 of Knowledge, Law, Strength.

Possessions: Ring of mind shielding.

Scarlet Women

Scarlet Women: Female human Com1; CR 1/3; Medium-size humanoid; HD 1d4; hp 3; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11 (Dex); Atk +0 melee (1d3 subdual, unarmed strike); AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 15. Height: 5'8"

Skills and Feats: Innuendo +1, Perform (seduction) +4, Sense Motive +3; Lightning Reflexes, Skill Focus (sense motive)

APPENDIX THREE:

MAGICAL ITEMS

Truth will come to light; murder cannot

be long hid

—William Shakespeare
The Merchant of Venice

The Fang of the Nosferatu

The true origins of this dagger are somewhat controversial. By one widely held account, the *Fang of the Nosferatu* was created a century ago for the vampire lord Urik von Kharkov. Von Kharkov offered the blade as a gift to an assassin named Mordal. When Mordal later betrayed his master, von Kharkov imprisoned him and allowed the dagger to slowly drain away his life over the course of many months. However, other accounts insist that the blade has been in the clutches of the darklord of Paridon for more than a century and a half. Few scholars agree on whether these conflicting accounts speak more to the unreliability of legends or to the strange twists of time in the Mists.

The *Fang* is a +3 *dagger* of hardened steel. With a critical hit, the dagger drinks some of the victim's blood, inflicting 1d4 points of temporary Constitution damage. Each lost point of Constitution restores 1 hp to the blade's wielder, if she is wounded. If the blade is left in a victim, it eventually drains the body dry. Flowing runes are etched into its curving blade and filled with ruby dust, making them glisten like wet blood. The hilt is wrapped in strange, coarse leather, thought to be the hide of a mind flayer or doppelganger. The end of the pommel features a large ruby in a steel setting. The side of the guard facing the blade is forged to resemble the face of a hissing vampire.

The *Fang* is intelligent (Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 16, Ego 25) and chaotic evil. It can communicate telepathically with its owner, and will immediately inform her of its powers and its bloodlust. While the *Fang* is in the owner's physical possession, she can transform at will into a wolf or bat, as per the spell *polymorph self*, except that changing shape does not restore hit points and, with the exception of the dagger itself, the owner's equipment does not transform to match the new form.

The *Fang* also acts as a conduit for the fear and pain of its victims. Most characters who land a successful attack with the blade must make a Horror save (DC 15) as if they were the victim. For sadists and other creatures that feed on fear and pain, however, this is nothing less than a banquet.

The *Fang* can subtly alter or enhance its powers to suit the desires of a specific owner. For example, if the *Fang*'s owner already has innate shapechanging abilities, then the dagger grants the ability to *polymorph self* (with the limitations listed above) into any Small, Medium-size, or Large animal.

The *Fang* thirsts for blood just like the vampire for which it is named. Each point of Constitution the dagger drinks slakes its thirst for one day, but it can only be sated for a maximum of seven days at a time, regardless of how much blood it drinks. This blood can usually be taken from any living creature, but the *Fang* must drink humanoid blood at least once per month. On any day that the dagger is not sated, it permanently drains 1 hp from its owner. Lost hp can be recovered only through *greater restoration*.

The evil intellect of the blade is always seeking to find the perfect person to wield it. As such, it sends telepathic messages to evil creatures around it, hinting at its magical power. The *Fang* has no limit to the range of this power, but it only contacts the most powerful and despicable people at large distances.

The Blood Rite

If the *Fang* is used to slay six humanoids, with each murder taking place at the stroke of midnight on six consecutive nights, the *Fang of the Nosferatu* offers an immense boon: For the next 13 years, the owner gains SR 20 and damage resistance 30/+5. The owner does not age during these years so long as she retains physical possession of the dagger. The *Fang* can offer this boon to only one creature at a time. Performing the blood rite is an Act of Ultimate Darkness.

Destroying the Fang

No method has yet been discovered to destroy the *Fang of the Nosferatu*.

Scarabs of Death, Timed

A *timed scarab of death* appears as a small pin or brooch shaped as an insect. They are typically made

from steel, edged and highlighted with silver or gold, and are rarely longer than an inch.

Like normal *scarabs of death*, *timed scarabs* are hideous magical items imbued with an unnatural hunger for the hearts of living creatures. Unlike a normal *scarab of death*, they can be set to go off at any point up to seven days in the future rather than burrowing into the flesh of a vulnerable creature as soon as they are held against a warm body.

Timed scarabs of death are activated by a command word, designated by their creator upon forging. If this command word is immediately followed by a spoken length of time between one minute and seven days, the *scarab* becomes 'primed' to go off at that time. If no length of time is specified or the length of time is not within the specified limits, they act as a normal *scarab of death*, going off whenever they are held for more than one round within one foot of a warm, living body. Once a time has been set, the *scarab* cannot be reset.

For example, if Sodo spoke the command word and 'six days', the *scarab of death* would activate itself exactly six days from that moment. If a living creature was carrying it, it would immediately burrow its way to their heart. If not, it would do so as soon as a living creature picked it up and held it for more than one round.

Timed scarabs of death become inactivated again once they have reached their bearer's heart, or whenever they are the target of a *resurrection* spell (including Sodo's *soothing touch*).

The most frightening power of the *timed scarabs of death* is that, if they are touched while 'primed', they grab hold of their victim's flesh and refuse to let go until either activated (whereupon they kill their host) or inactivated by a *resurrection* spell. The *scarab's* grip is firm but not painful, unless the host tries to remove it. If so, they must make an opposed Strength check. The *scarab* has a Strength of 30. If the host wins, the *scarab* is removed, but remains primed. If the *scarab* wins, it burrows partway into its host, inflicting 3d6 points of subdual damage. If the host makes another attempt to remove it, the *scarab* becomes activated and kills its host.

Obviously, creatures that have no need for their heart, like undead or constructs, or who don't possess a heart, are unaffected by *timed scarabs of death*.

Caster Level: 19th; Prerequisites: Create Wondrous Item, sanctuary, slay living; Market Price: 100,000 gp.

16/7/862. Miss Shirley Archer, shop clerk. Farringdon Street. Throat cut.
17/7/862. Mr. Bryce Folsom, shop clerk. Hawk Road. Several deep stabs in back, throat slit.
18/7/862. Mr. Allan Jakes, shop clerk. Hampshire Heights. Throat slit, left eye punctured.
19/7/862. Miss Erica Lynn, shop clerk. Dufferin Street. Throat cut.
20/7/862. Mrs. Ernestine Bramah, shop clerk. Whelan Road. Blow to the head with a blunt instrument, stab to the back of the neck.
21/7/862. Miss Felicity Chambers, shop clerk. Moorgate Boulevard. Throat cut, body exsanguinated.

16/7/875. Mr. Christopher Masters, carpenter. Potter's Field. 2 punctures in neck. Body exsanguinated, face up.
17/7/875. Mr. Julian Pilcher, ironworker. Tavistock Boulevard. 6 punctures in neck. Exsanguinated, face up.
18/7/875. Mr. Desmond Morris, laborer. Blackfriar's Road. 1 puncture in armpit. Partially exsanguinated, face up.
19/7/875. Mr. John J. Goodler, laborer. White's Row. Numerous punctures across chest. Exsanguinated, face up.
20/7/875. Mr. Michael King, unemployed. Bishopgate Road. 5 punctures in upper thigh, several in throat. Exsang, face up.
21/7/875. Mr. Lionel Davidson, blacksmith. Wormwood Street. Punctures in throat. Exsanguinated, face up.

16/7/888. Miss Beatrice Bump, scarlet woman. Moorgate Boulevard. Throat slit, partially exsanguinated.
17/7/888. Miss Annie Smitters, scarlet woman. Oxford Street. Throat cut, some internal organs removed via slits in flesh.
18/7/888. Miss Sandra Bartello, scarlet woman. Tavistock Boulevard. Throat cut, internal organs removed.
19/7/888. Mrs. Mariel Rigoby, housewife. Rodney Road. Throat slit, hands removed.
20/7/888. Miss Charlotte O'Doul, scarlet woman. Kirby Street. Throat severed, all internal organs removed.
24/7/888. Colonel George Greene, retired. Markham Row. Asphyxiated, stabbed in left arm.
25/7/888. Mrs. Heather Prentice, retired. Christopher Street. Asphyxiated, stabbed in left forearm.
26/7/888. Mr. Graham Toph, retired. Silk Street. Asph., stab right arm.
27/7/888. Mrs. Jane Stilwell, seamstress. Roseberry Avenue. Asphyxiated, stabbed in left forearm.
28/7/888. Mrs. Yvette Donnohue, retired. Amwell Street. Hanged, disembowelled. Exsanguinated.
29/7/888. Mr. Andrew McTab, retired. Guinea Street. Asphyxiated, stabbed in stomach. Exsan.

BLOODY JACK DUE BACK!

Murder at Midnight?

Once every thirteen years, a faceless killer comes to the streets of Paridon. For six nights, this Bloody Jack takes a life with his wicked blade, all done in service to some hideous, repeating ritual understood only by the killer.

Once Jack has killed six midnights in a row, he vanishes for another thirteen years. Such has been the case for 182 years. It seems plain that there have been many Bloody Jacks throughout time. Who will it be this year?

Who Is Bloody Jack?

"The only thing we know about Bloody Jack," stated a constable who wishes not to be named, "is that we know nothing about him whatsoever."

Is this the case, or do we know Bloody Jack all too well? The murders of thirteen years past revealed the terrible existence of doppelgangers in our fair city, and to this day many investigators maintain that

Cont. on pg. 2

First Bloodworth Victim Slain Thirteen Years Ago Tonight!

At the stroke of midnight on Septemont 16, 888, the killer known then only as Bloody Jack returned to Paridon, this time to prey upon those questionable women whose profession is to keep company with gentlemen of low moral fibre.

The midnight murder of one of these low women sparked a fervent investigation combining the best talents of the Paridon Guard, private investigators, and even a group of foreign travellers who volunteered their services after witnessing the first murder.

Over the following six days and nights, this investigation produced one shocking discovery after another. Not only was the killer revealed to be Sir Edmund Bloodworth, a respected member of the gentry, this "Bloody Jack" worked with two accomplices— one of whom was none other than the

Cont. on pg. 2

What of the Flickerflame?

Are the Bloody Jack murders the act of the Flickerflame? One of the stranger theories to have arisen amidst the shocking Bloodworth murders of thirteen years ago remains a topic of heated debate to this very day.

As our informed readers know, the Flickerflame is a phantom, a figure whose form is said to flicker like a sputtering candle. It is said to come in the night to the weak and infirm to

Cont. on pg. 2

Council Advises Vigilance, Caution

Facing the possible return of Bloody Jack to our streets tonight, the City Council has issued the following statement:

"In the name of public welfare, all citizens should remain within the safety of their homes as midnight passes tonight. Seek out large groups to pass the time if possible. The

Cont. on pg. 2

Cont.: Who Is Jack?

Sir Edmund Bloodsworth was himself one of these shape-stealing fiends. If this holds true again this year, then Bloody Jack could be anyone and anywhere—even someone one holds dear.

The staff of the *Newsbill* sternly warns our readers to keep their own council until this dark hour has passed.

Cont.: Thirteen Years Ago Tonight!

Inspector of the Guard and leader of the investigation!

Yet even this paled before the revelation that none of the killers were human—that shape-changing doppelgangers lurked among us, and continue to do so to this day.

Bloodsworth was slain after claiming his fifth victim. Yet the Bloody Jack killings began anew only days later, taking another six lives and breaking the killer's pattern. The identity of this second murderer, who targeted the elderly, remains a mystery.

Will a new Bloody Jack step forward tonight? If so, will he even be human?

Daily Bulletin

To place an item, please present it at the *Newsbill* offices no later than 6 PM. Cost: 1 sh. per line.

Note: Brewer's Public House has reopened, having completed renovations of its kitchen.

The Vigilance Committee will meet at 9 p.m. at Wharton Hall.

EAP: Happy anniversary. SJP.

Cont.: Flickerflame

murder them in their beds—a tale always told, peculiarly enough, by those very people who claim to have been the spectre's victims.

Common wisdom holds that the Flickerflame is nothing more than a crass ghost story. Yet over the years several respected minds have stepped forward to proclaim their belief that the Flickerflame is very real indeed.

The most startling claim of all came from several investigators of the Bloodsworth murders, who expounded upon the obvious ritualistic aspects of the Bloody Jack murder cycle. To wit, they claimed that these murders most foul served an even darker purpose: a bloody form of magical rite, committed on behalf of this shapeless bogeyman!

Prevailing opinion, including that of the gentlemen of the City Council, remains that the theory is devoid of merit. "The crimes of Sir Edmund were quite terrible enough in themselves," claimed councilman Reginald Tremblay yesterday. "I see no sense in the insistence of a few people upon attaching their occult suspicions to this dirty business."

Perhaps this year shall at long last reveal the truth lying at the heart of this sordid affair.

Seminars Cancelled

In the interest of public safety, all seminars scheduled to be held this week at the Temple of Divine Form have been cancelled.

Cont.: Vigilance

Paridon Guard will be zealously patrolling the streets, and we have complete confidence in their abilities to keep the peace and protect the innocent of our fair city. Should you see or hear anything suspicious, do not hesitate to alert a patrolling constable, if it is safe to do so.

"One should not allow oneself to succumb to fear. Past killers have relied upon fear driving their victims to make fatal errors.

"Rest assured that, so long as everyone adheres to this simple advice, there shall be no cause for undue concern. Any potential murderer walking our streets tonight will have a very hard time of it indeed."

Shadow Killer Sighted!

Mr. Lewis Osterlee, a private coachman, claims to have had a frightening encounter with a creature early yesterday morning fitting the common depiction of the rumoured Shadow Killers.

"It was right at daybreak," said Mr. Osterlee. "The first thing I saw was those terrible red eyes, peering out at me from the back of the stable as I was fitting my coach. I might have thought it a ghost, but it was all wet and black. It was the noise that got to me most—it was whinnying (quietly), just like (my horse).

"I was terrified, I admit," he added. "I ran out into the street and hailed a constable. When we went back in, the devil had vanished. There was nowhere it could have gone!"

POISED TO STRIKE?

Where's Bloody Jack?

Bloody Jack's name strikes terror into the heart of all Paridoners. Doppelgangers have been murdering victims every thirteen years for the last 182 years, almost invariably beginning their murderous spree on the sixteenth of Septemont — yesterday.

In each past cycle these foul monsters have shown their contempt for us, murdering at midnight in the busiest areas of Paridon and making no effort to disguise their grim handiwork. Instead, they seem to revel in the terror that their monstrous deeds strike into the hearts of upright, decent Paridoners.

Where, then, is this year's macabre visitation? Why has Bloody Jack remained hidden when he has never before shown caution? Is it because our long nightmare has finally ended, our long vigilance rewarded by doppelgangers moving on to greener pastures?

Or is Bloody Jack's seeming absence another illusion, as some

Cont. on pg. 2

Editorial: Memoirs of 888

Long-time readers of the *Newsbill* will remember Percy Granger's impassioned and moving account of life in Paridon's poorer sections during the last Bloody Jack murders.

Public response was so overwhelming to Granger's article that the humble reporter's name became known in every household in Paridon. To aid public awareness, the *Newsbill* has decided to reprint sections of the article, to remind our valued readers of the magnitude of villainy that we face.

"Horror ran through the land. Men spoke of it with bated breath and pale-lipped women shuddered as they read the dreadful details. People afar oft smelled blood, and the superstitious said that the skies were of a deeper red...

"Mrs. Mary Burrige, a floor cloth dealer, was so overcome by reading an account

Cont. on pg. 2

Council Repeats Call for Caution

Although no trace of Bloody Jack's deadly craft has been found so far, the City Council has not stopped its calls for vigilance and caution. Early this morning, after a long meeting with the Chief Constable, the City Council issued the following statement:

"After extensive consultation with Inspector Wortle, we feel confident that Bloody Jack has not yet returned to our fair city.

Cont. on pg. 2

Shadow Killers!

Miss Marjorie Williams, a seamstress of firm and sober standing, claims to have had a frightening encounter with the creatures commonly described as Shadow Killers.

Miss Williams was preparing to retire when she glanced out of her parlor window. "I saw two horrible red eyes peering in at me," she said, later describing

Cont. on pg. 2

Cont.: Editorial 888

of the dreadful murders that she was stricken dead, and fell from her chair...

“A nameless reprobate – half-man, half-beast – is at large. Hideous malice, deadly cunning, insatiable thirst for the blood of the ladies of the night – all these are the marks of the mad homicide. The ghoul-like creature is simply drunk with blood, and he will have more...

“Bloody Jack holds Paridon in the palm of his hand. Men dare not speak his name, and attribute fell superstitions to him. Whispered conversations claim he is one with the fog, or has eyes of flame, or numerous features more commonly attributed to devils than men...

“Despite their fear, the brave Paridoners refuse to succumb to fear. Fortified with spirits, numbers and arms, they prowl the streets, determined to save their homes from a man they see only in their dreams. What demon can destroy the spirits of the plucky West Ender or the valiant sparrows of the South? ‘Hear us,’ they seem to shout as they go about their businesses and defend their homes. ‘We are Paridoners, and our spirit will never be broken.’”

Mist Rumors

Travelers claim to be unable to leave Paridon, becoming lost in the fog whenever they near the outskirts of the city. In the interest of public safety, avoid these areas.

Cont.: Where’s Jack?

sources close to the City Council have suggested. A senior civil servant, who doesn’t wish to be named for fear of the repercussions it may bring upon his family, told the *Newsbill*’s reporters early this morning that Bloody Jack had indeed struck. The matter has been hushed up, all traces of the heinous crime removed, by the City Guard at the orders of a highly placed noble family – “perhaps so high as to touch the Crown”, our source hinted meaningfully.

Is this because, once again, shape-stealing fiends have infiltrated Paridon’s nobility, and the city machinery has concealed this fact? Inspector Wortle refused to comment when faced with this allegation. Does his silence hide a terrible secret?

Daily Bulletin

To place an item, please present it at the *Newsbill* offices no later than 6 PM. Cost: 1 sh. per line.

Work: Supervisor required for waste management. Inquire at Foreman’s Junkyard, Frampton Road.

Note: YPWS’s seminar will be at 7 p.m. in Grovener Hall. Refreshments provided.

Work: Polly’s Apothecary seeks new assistant. Can train. Inquire during daylight hours.

Lost: Gold cufflink, engraved AGL, in North End. Inquire at PGH for details, possible reward.

Cont.: Shadow Killers!

the offending eyes as resembling hot coals. She could make out no other feature of her stalker’s face.

Miss Williams sighting brings the number of reported Shadow Killers to eight in the last week, nearly three times that reported in the week before. Such fortuitous timing cannot be coincidental. Do the increased numbers of these strange beasts indicate that they have some connection to Bloody Jack?

Are the Shadow Killers agents of the fiend? Or does their fearsome appearance disguise the hearts of guardian angels? Are they keeping Bloody Jack from Paridon?

Cont.: Caution

However, Bloody Jack has broken his pattern before, and his absence last night does not mean that his threat is spent. We must remain wary, but also avoid the hysteria this fiend wished to implant in our breasts.

“The Paridon Guard will again be patrolling the streets. Citizens should remain inside their homes as midnight approaches. Do not open the door to anyone at the fatal hour, no matter how they entreat you or how well they are known to you.

“We remain confident that, should everyone adhere to this simple advice, the Guard will quickly bring the murderer to justice. There is no need for concern.”

NIGHT ATTACK: SHADOW JACK?

Shadow Killers Loose In North End!

The night-time quiet was shattered last night by a crime of unimaginable horror.

"It were Bloody Jack!"

Angus Drury, 39, of Cottingam Row told our reporter. Drury, a laborer of some standing in his local community, was making his way home at midnight last night when he happened across a trio of scarlet women. As any honest man would do, Drury warned the women of the danger in which they were placing themselves and offered to accompany them to safety. Sadly, the ladies ignored his advice, the wisdom of which was proved only a moment later.

"There were this terrible stink, like I don't want what, and then these monsters started pouring out of the alley, just as the clock started striking. I was all I could do to keep a grip on myself."

The Shadow Killers attacked the three women, and would have dragged them back to their noisome lair were it not

Cont. on pg. 2

Shadow Killers: Bloody Jack?

Following last night's attack on three women by creatures closely resembling those referred to a "Shadow Killers", we must ask ourselves: are these nightmarish creatures linked to the Bloody Jack murders in any way?

It cannot be simple coincidence that scarlet women, the favored prey of our notorious killer, were attacked last night upon the stroke of twelve. We are well aware that inhuman creatures have, in the past, perpetrated the murders. Could it be that Bloody Jack is no longer the sole providence of the doppelgangers? Could another race of equally monstrous creatures lurk in the bowels of our city, emerging only to commit the most heinous of crimes? Never before have so many Shadow Killer sightings been reported, and evidence seems to be mounting to prove their existence. It seems most likely that the Shadow Killers will live up to their name for another six nights of deaths.

Guards Enter Sewers to Horrific Results

Following the Shadow Killers' attack last night, the City Guard entered the sewers this morning to uncover more information about the attack. Sadly, the expedition turned to tragedy almost immediately. We must advise that the following story contains details that may disturb those of sensitive dispositions. If you are easily shocked or alarmed, please do not continue.

"We prepared the officers as best we could," said a shaken Inspector Wortle after the event. "Each guardsman volunteered for the duty, and was equipped with heavy armor, a sword, a pistol and a torch. They were instructed to remain together at all costs." Yet despite these precautions, the invasion of the Shadow Killer's dark home turned to disaster.

Five constables entered the sewer from the grating in Regency Square, to explore the area for concrete proof of the Shadow Killers' existence and

Cont. on pg. 2

Cont.: Guards Enter Sewers

determine any possible link to the Bloody Jack murders. They acted under strict instructions to report back, as a group, every half hour. They never did so.

Inspector Wortle waited another half hour, and decided to send another ten officers in to recover the first group. They were accompanied by Meredith Corwin, a cleric of the Divinity of Mankind, to offer any first aid she could.

The party had passed the sewer grating for no more than a minute when a terrible scream rent the night. "It sounded more like it came from a fiend of hell than a normal throat," said one witness. Seconds later, a vast number of dismembered body parts erupted from the sewer, accompanied by gallons of filth and blood. Those closest to the grating were coated in the grim remains, and many have had to be excused from their duties do to mental shock.

Sadly, even then the worst was not yet over. As the officers tried to make sense of the carnage, one happened to notice that no a single head lay among the remains. Then, one by one, all of the sewer gratings in sight burst from their moorings and flew into the air like corks from bottles. Accompanying each was one of the fallen officers' heads.

In the wake of these horrific events, Regency Square and the surrounding streets have been closed to public thoroughfare. Under no circumstances should people enter the sewers.

Cont.: Killers Loose

for the brave intervention of a group of foreign travelers, who moved to protect the endangered ladies with no concern for the danger they were placing themselves in.

"It was of course a commendable and courageous act," said Councillor Frederick Bournart, who spoke to us this morning. "And I suspect that if more people were prepared to put themselves forwards in this fashion, for unknown personages of dubious morality, then Paridon would not be in its present state."

The City Guard were soon on the scene and heavily questioned all those involved. However, Mistress Eleanor Pew, an elderly widow that lives near the corner where the event took place, maintained that questioning was not all the guardsmen did.

"They had some kind of cart with them," said Mss. Pew. Further inquiries revealed that the coroner's cart was called out early this morning. Inspector Wortle, when asked about this, stated that the coroner's cart had been called out on a completely separate piece of business, unrelated to the Shadow Killer attack.

Is some kind of conspiracy once again occurring within the City Guard's offices? Have the Guards finally captured Bloody Jack, or was the attack more successful than we were led to believe. The public have a right to know when the security of the realm is at stake as it so obviously is in this case.

List of the Fallen

With heavy hearts, the *Newsbill* presents a list of all those officers killed in this morning's terrible events. Our deepest sympathies, and those of all Paridon, go to the families of those brave souls who sacrificed their lives in an attempt to bring Bloody Jack to justice.

Celebrant Meredith Corwin.
Lance-Constable Henry Blake.

Constable Samuel Baker
Constable Steven Brown.
Constable Gina Bunce.
Constable Reginald Dwite
Constable Annette Fields
Constable John Griffiths.
Constable Ian Jenkins.
Constable Rachel Kidman.
Constable Sarah Jane Smith.
Constable David Page.
Constable Penelope Tons.
Sergeant Geoffrey Hollis.
Sergeant Polly Quinnan.
Sergeant Alan Turing.

Daily Bulletin

To place an item, please present it at the *Newsbill* offices no later than 6 PM. Cost: 1 sh. per line.

Invidian peaches — three for a pound at North Shore Grocers.

N.N.: MS. found.

Wanted: William 'Big Bill' Green, for assault and the theft of grain. Reward 20 gp for information leading to arrest. Contact Constable Pickett, Thrale Street Guard House.

Barber: George Elliot, Sign of the Drum, finest barber in Paridon. Teeth pulling by appt.

S.G.: Will meet at TSP at 8. Bring TST.

BLOODY JACK CUT SHORT!

Suspicious Confirmed: Jack Was At Large!

Today's arrest proves correct the warnings previously issued by the staff of the *Newsbill*: Bloody Jack had already claimed one life at the time of his capture.

It has been known for some time that Bloody Jack altered his methods of killing with each cycle of murders. Thirteen years ago, following the Bloodsworth murders, the cause for this change of habit was revealed. Since that time Paridon has been

Cont. on pg. 2

Killer Was Close to City Council

The *Newsbill* has discovered that Dr. George Burton, now revealed to be guilty of the latest Bloody Jack murder, moved in high circles. Dr. Burton is known to attend to several members of the City Council in a professional

Cont. on pg. 2

Brutal Killer Foiled; Murder Knife Found

Paridon's much - beleaguered City Guard proved its worth today when it brought the latest killing spree of Bloody Jack to an end nearly before it had begun.

The sudden end to the latest killing rampage of Bloody Jack—now known to be one Dr. George Burton—began earlier in the day, when a group of foreign travellers currently staying in our city made the grisly discovery of Burton's first and only victim: his own wife, Mrs. Estelle Burton.

A rapid investigation led the City Guard to the Burton home. There, constables uncovered signs of foul play and, most damning of all, the ritual blade known to have been wielded by the previous villain to assume the Bloody Jack legacy, Sir Edmund Bloodsworth. The Guard then located Bloody Burton, who surrendered without a struggle.

Dr. Burton is now being held

Cont. on pg. 2

Body Under Floor Provides Vital Clue

Bloody Jack was foiled by his own victim. Constables deduce that Dr. Burton murdered his wife at midnight last night, then before dawn secreted her corpse to a boarding house the Burtons are known to have visited the

Cont. on pg. 2

Streets Safe at Last?

With the swift defeat of Bloody Jack, can the citizens of Paridon at last breathe a sigh of relief? Although the immediate danger has been removed, what of the Flickerflame or Shadow Killers?

Councilman Chas Stanley issued the following statement: "The people of Paridon should remember that the Flickerflame is nothing more than rumour; the bogeyman of children and the insane. Nor is there any real proof that the so-called 'Shadow Killer' have ever taken a life, now we know the truth of the Bloody Jack murders. The streets are safe, with no small thanks to the Guard."

Cont.: Jack at Large fearfully watching and waiting for the next murder cycle, unable

to guess what form these murders would take. Now all is known, or can be deduced.

After murdering his wife, Dr. Burton went to great lengths to hide the corpse. It seems that he sought to conceal the murders from the prying eyes of Paridon, lulling our caution with false hope that the killings had not begun.

Cont.: Under Floor

night previous as part of the slain Mrs. Burton's duties as a midwife. There he placed the body beneath the floorboards of a vacant room, in the apparent hope that his victim would not be discovered until after he could complete the remaining murders of the profane six-night cycle.

However, it was not to be. At some point during the day today, visitors staying in the room above detected the odour of decay emanating from the room below.

An examination followed, and the visitors discovered the body of the unfortunate Mrs. Burton. These folk then offered their services to the Guard and were instrumental in discovering the identities of both the slain woman and her murderous husband.

It is not yet known how Dr. Burton was able to access the room without detection. The Guard is concerned for the safety of the couple previously renting the room.

A Mystery Remains: Is Burton Really Burton?

At this moment, Dr. George Burton remains safely under lock and key, awaiting trial for the murder of his wife and under suspicion of being the fourteenth madman to commit the Bloody Jack murder cycle. At present, no lawyer has been appointed to defend Burton in trial.

The evidence against Burton is damning, but is the blackguard in that cell truly Dr. Burton?

No citizen of Paridon needs to be reminded of the ever-present doppelganger threat infecting our city. Is the Bloody Burton who killed his wife truly a madman, or is he a creature even worse? If he is indeed a doppelganger, will that race's notorious ability for deception prevent the swift execution of justice?

When asked, the confident Inspector James Wortle of the City Guard proved himself a wise man, offering the following evaluation: "It does not really matter (whether the doctor is Burton or not). We have enough evidence to hang him, no matter what or who he is. And hang he surly will."

Announcement

The staff of the *Newsbill* extends a hearty congratulations to all of those who participated in the rapid capture of Bloody Jack for the courageous service they have done our city. May they all be justly rewarded for their valour and vigilance.

Cont.: Close to Council

capacity, and has been seen with several councilmen in social settings as well. While the discovery that Bloody Jack was in fact on familiar terms with select gentlemen of the City Council is alarming, it must be hoped that this news comes as a shock to the City Council as well. Perhaps this can be taken as a sign that the increased vigilance they have promoted in these past, harsh years has not sufficiently addressed the burdens weighing upon our society.

The City Council has not yet issued a statement in reference to the identity of Bloody Jack.

Cont.: Killer Foiled

at the City Jail under lock and key. It should be noted that the issue remains unresolved as to whether Dr. Burton acted alone or if he worked with accomplices, as the prior Bloody Jack killer, the late Edmund Bloodsworth, is known to have done. Inspector Francine Maxwell has stated that the City Guard will be exploring both alternatives fully to determine the truth of the matter.

However, the ritual murder blade is also under close guard, ensuring that neither Dr. Burton, nor any possible accomplices, nor any other bloodthirsty madman in this city will be able to continue the Bloody Jack killings. Hopefully, after 182 years, the Bloody Jack killings are finally over.

BLOODY JACK: SCARLET WOMAN

Bloody Jack at Large Again!

Last night, the *Newsbill* had the pleasure and the honor of informing the public of Paridon that Bloody Jack had been captured due to the diligence of the City Guard. Less than twelve hours later, we must sadly report that Bloody Jack is once again at large due to the incompetence of those same Guards. To make matters worse, the Guards had cornered Bloody Jack twice last night, only to have the killer escape both times.

Dr. George Burton was yesterday revealed to be the newest madman to assume the mantle of Bloody Jack with the wretched murder of his wife. He was arrested and imprisoned.

However, the killer had been held for no more than a handful of hours when he revealed himself to be a

Cont. this pg.

Chief Constable Quits

Following last night's debacle at the City Guard Headquarters, Inspector James Wortle announced his retirement today from the City Guard, citing family pressures as his reason for early retirement.

Is this the only reason for Wortle's long-overdue removal from the guard? A source close to Wortle reports that he fell into a paranoid rage when he discovered Bloody Jack had escaped, almost shooting one of his own men. He was also a heavy drinker.

Wortle was also summoned to the City Council early this morning, where he was officially removed from his duties. One would note that a summons to the Council isn't entirely consistent with retiring of one's own free will. But following Wortle's ineptitude last night, one can only assume the change is for the best.

Cont.: At Large Again

doppelganger and escaped. Although reports are unclear, it seems that Dr. Burton was visited shortly before his escape by the Honorable J. M. Rhodes. The Councilman intended to represent his friend at trial, and was described as being in "a furious and greatly agitated state, often protesting the innocence of (Burton)". For some reason, he was allowed to see Bloody Jack with only two guards accompanying him. Hindsight suggests that this was a stroke of pure stupidity on behalf of Inspector Wortle. Had he not permitted the visit, Bloody Jack would likely still be in custody at this moment.

Sadly, this humanitarian effort proved to be Councilor Rhodes' downfall. In a feat of incredible strength, Bloody Jack had already broken free of his cell and slammed the door to the

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Cont.: At Large Again

cellblock as soon as Rhodes had passed through. The villain then made short work of Rhodes, killing him and the guard who accompanied him before escaping through the adjoining morgue.

The doppelganger, now wearing Rhodes' appearance, hid until midnight, when he made his way to a house of low women in the West End. There, the monster completed his terrible work, murdering a scarlet woman by the name of Mary.

The City Guard had managed to track Bloody Jack to this den of iniquity, and even managed to corner him in Mary's boudoir. In a streak of gross incompetence, however, the Guards allowed Rhodes to escape in the form of the scarlet woman! Despite the Guards' best efforts to recapture her, she remains at large due to the credulity and incompetence of those supposedly protecting Paridon from threats such as this.

City Still Isolated

For unknown reasons, merchants and travelers are still unable to leave Paridon, becoming lost in the fog whenever they near the city boundaries. Grain merchants are beginning to struggle to meet demand. A spokesman claimed that within two days, all imported food will be exhausted, and we will be forced to rely totally on native gardens.

Wortle's Replacement Advises Caution

Inspector Francine Maxwell, appointed Acting Chief Constable early this morning, has released her first public statement. Given the unusual circumstances of her appointment, Maxwell's tone is understandably bleak.

"The Paridon City Guard is able to inform the public that Bloody Jack is currently known to appear in the form of a scarlet woman. She is approximately 5 feet, 6 inches tall, with auburn hair and blue eyes. However, we are also aware that Bloody Jack is a doppelganger, so these cosmetic features may be altered to disguise the murderess' identity and lure new victims.

"As such, we advise that all Paridoners avoid any contact or solitary travel with women of this kind. This warning is extended to other scarlet women; Bloody Jack may target other scarlet women, not clients, as his next victim.

"We recommend citizens return to their houses at nightfall and remain there until morning. If possible, ensure you remain in large groups at all times. There is no cause for panic. The City Guard has matters safely in hand, and we are confident we will bring Bloody Jack to justice shortly. We will inform you of new events as they develop."

Of course, after last night, the *Newsbill* must ask how "confident" the citizenry should be in this statement. Will Bloody Jack escape again?

A Conspiracy?

Long-time readers will recall that during Bloody Jack's last murderous rampage, a number of prominent citizens, amongst them Lord Edmund Bloodsworth and Chief Constable Andrew Logan, were exposed as doppelgangers. This time, Dr. George Burton and James Montague Rhodes have both become involved in the Bloody Jack murders.

Is there a connection between the four men? All were well-respected, upstanding gentlemen close to the City Council.

If all of these men are members or friends of members of the City Council, should we not inquire closely into the Council's business, to determine if any more of the foremost citizens of Paridon have been corrupted by an inhuman threat?

Could this explain the ongoing incompetence of the City Guard? Perhaps they too are corrupted, or stymied by orders from above? The *Newsbill* promises to tirelessly pursue the truth until we uncover it.

Daily Bulletin

To place an item, please present it at the *Newsbill* offices no later than 6 PM. Cost: 1 sh. per line.

The Vigilance Committee will meet at 9 p.m. at Pulvers Hall.

Work: Experienced carpenter req'd, Manley and Sons in Edmond Street.

For sale: Clockwork musical box, 2000 gp. Lord S. Lawson, c/o *Newsbill* offices.

BLOODY JACK TAUNTS THE LAW!

Bloody Jack Writes to *Newsbill*

At 11 p.m. last night, Bloody Jack displayed a new level of contempt for the Paridon's forces of law and order. Before planning her nightly murder, the Scarlet Woman took time to pen a letter to the *Newsbill*. The letter was delivered anonymously, and discovered by Mr. Edward Trent, a long-time press hand at the *Newsbill* print shop.

"I was coming on shift at 11 when I saw a piece of paper under the door," said Trent. "You could have knocked me over with a feather when I saw what was written on it."

As far as the *Newsbill* staff can ascertain, this letter is indeed the work of the murderess. It is printed in full below.

A Letter to the Editor

Mr. Randolph,

I write to you at this time to inform you that I will never be captured. Quite simply, I am the perfect murderer, far, far superior to the fools your council has dispatched to capture me.

These cretins have been outwitted at every turn. Every step forward they seem to have made is really a cunning trap, designed to set them a dozen steps back. Like lambs to the slaughter, they have wandered into every one. They are puppets, dancing to my bloody song.

I could easily have killed any number of them at any time I desired; I have had more than enough opportunities to do so. I

Cont. next column

Cont.: Letter

have been right under their noses, and they have never noticed. I could walk into their headquarters at any time and they wouldn't pay me any more attention than they would to any man off the street. It amuses me that I am so close, but they never suspect my presence. These very pages seem to report that I have been caught in a different guise every day. I have news for you, sir: I will never be caught, and you may print such drivel until your press runs dry. When you are long gone, I will still be here to threaten your grandchildren. I won't stop until I'm caught, you see, and I will never be caught.

Even the families of my victims remain unaware of

Cont. on pg. 2

Cont.: Letter

my existence. I am the perfect killer; when I deal out my justice, no one even misses the victim. You Paridoners are all fools. No one can match my boundless intellect and flawless murders. I may even leave some clues next time, just to help you a little. An ear, perhaps? A letter penned in blood? A whole corpse? I care not; I can easily evade your puerile little plans. I am the greatest mechanism of destruction ever forged in this ridiculous city. Even the shapeshifters (Note that this word was written with extreme passion, almost tearing the paper in his fury – Ed.) cower at my name!

I would also like to inform your readers that the old saying is true: the best way to a man's heart is indeed through his stomach, and a woman's best feature is her medulla.

Please pass my condolences on to ex-Inspector Wortle over his early retirement. It is always such a shame to lose such a competent and hard working officer of the guard. Also, inform the current Chief Constable that I shall be with her shortly. I wait with baited breath, my dear.

Do you ever wonder whether I laugh as I kill them?

Your obt. servant,
Bloody Jack

P.S. I hope you don't object to my using a professional name.

“Murdered” Man Still Alive

Late last night, the inhabitants of Copperfield Mew were disturbed by terrible screams and cries for help. Fearing the worst, Mrs. Hilary Brascombe led a party of brave fellows into her neighbor's house, where she discovered Mr. Cedric Catto, an elderly widower. He was distraught and refused to be consoled.

“I have been murdered!” he cried. “Bloody Jack has done me in!”

Informed readers will immediately recognize the bizarre hallmarks of the Flickerflame.

However, in the light of Bloody Jack's letter (printed above), a more worrying suggestion presents itself.

Could Bloody Jack and the Flickerflame be one and the same? Although the Flickerflame (if it truly exists) has never directly harmed one of its victims, Bloody Jack claims that “when I deal out my justice, no one even misses the victim”. The link is clear – perhaps no one misses the victim because there is no evidence of the crime?

Could Bloody Jack and the Flickerflame be one and the same? Further investigation must be performed to prove the Flickerflame's existence. When will the guard take tales of the Flickerflame seriously enough to investigate?

Chief Constable Confused

The new Chief Constable of Paridon, Inspector Francine Maxwell, admitted last night that she had no further leads in the Bloody Jack murders.

“Quite simply, we are relying on public assistance to locate the murderer,” said she. “Information from certain citizens have already proved invaluable, but that avenue is no longer open to us.

“Bloody Jack – whether he is beast or human – must be known to someone. If you know of someone who has been acting suspiciously lately, please don't hesitate to contact the Guard.”

Daily Bulletin

To place an item, please present it at the *Newsbill* offices no later than 6 P.M.

Cost: 1 sh. per line.

Work: Maid of all work required. Apply at the Rein Estate, Holborn Road. References essential.

The Vigilance Committee will meet at 9 p.m. at Wharton Hall.

Note: Mary Jane Bennett's Apothecary will be closed until further notice.

AA: Meet at the usual place, 5 p.m. CF.

Blacksmith: James H. Franklin and Sons. 2 generations of expert smiths. No job too large. Mechanical looms a specialty.