Sanctum Secorum

Episode #17

A Night in the Lonesome October

Compatible With DCC RPG

Sanctum Secorum Podcast
Episode #17 Companion

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COMPATIBLE WITH DCC RPG

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Table of Contents

Lonesome October [Illustration]	Todd McGowan	page 4
Familiars		
Bubo (packrat)	Bob Brinkman	page 5
Pack Rat [Illustration]		page 5
Cheeter (squirrel)	Bob Brinkman	page 5
Squirrel [Illustration]		page 5
Graymalk (black cat)	Bob Brinkman	page 6
Black Cat on Pumpkin [Illustration]		page 6
Needle (vampire bat)	Bob Brinkman	page 6
Bat [Illustration]		page 6
Nightwind (barn owl)	Bob Brinkman	page 7
Barn Owl [Illustration]		page 7
Quicklime (black snake)	Bob Brinkman	page 7
Black Snake [Illustration]		page 7
Snuff (hound)	Bob Brinkman	page 8
Guard Dog [Illustration]		page 8
Tekela (albino raven)	Bob Brinkman	page 8
Don't Get Too Attached: Parasitic Familiars	David Baity	page 9
A Horsehair Worm [Photograph]	D. Andreas Schmidt-Rhaesa	page 10
Cuckoo Wasp [Photograph]	Benjamin Smith	page 11
Magic Items		
The Ripper's Blade	Daniel J. Bishop	page 12
Bloody Knife Stock [Photograph]	Antotoooo	page 12
Wolf Flower	Jen Brinkman	page 12
Monsters		
The Experiment Man	Daniel J. Bishop	page 13
Frankenstein [Illustration]	Su Yeong Kim	page 13
The Thing in the Wardrobe	Bob Brinkman	page 13
The Monster in Your Closet [Illustration]	Lacy Franks	page 13

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Familiars

Bubo (packrat)

"At the entrance to the front hall I caught the scent. I halted, watched, listened. I became aware of a slight movement—low, and to my right—ahead.

It sat before the mirror watching the slitherers. I suspended breathing and edged forward. When I was near enough to catch it with a short lunge I said, "I trust you are finding your last moments amusing."

It leaped and I was upon it, catching it at the base of the neck—a large, black rat."

- *A Night in the Lonesome October*, Roger Zelazny

Bubo: Init +1; Atk bite +1 melee (1 hp); AC 12; HD 1d3; MV 60'; Act 1d20; SP animal speech, bindable, infravision 60', magically aware; SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +2; AL N.

Animal speech: Bubo is highly intelligent and is capable of conversing with any other type of animal.

Bindable: Nothing more than a highly clever packrat, Bubo may be bound as an ordinary familiar and will jump at the opportunity.

Magically aware: Bubo is already knowledgeable in the basic workings of magic and has the innate ability to *detect magic* (as per the spell) with a spell check result of 18.

Cheeter (grey squirrel)

"*The old man who lives up the road was in his yard, harvesting mistletoe from a tree, using a small, shining sickle. A squirrel sat upon his shoulder. This was a new development.*"

- *A Night in the Lonesome October*, Roger Zelazny

Cheeter: Init +4; Atk bite + melee (1d3); AC 14; HD 1d4+2; MV 40'; Act 1d20; SP animal speech, familiar (arcane), familiar traits, human speech, infravision 100', shadow bound; SV *Special*; AL L.

Animal speech: As a familiar, Cheeter is capable of conversing with any other type of animal.

Familiar (arcane): As an arcane familiar, Cheeter knows the spell *fly*, and grants his master the ability to cast this spell.

Glider: While not a flying squirrel, Cheeter has been granted the ability to safely glide through the air (via his being shadow bound).

Human speech: From the hour of midnight until sunrise, Cheeter is capable of speaking to his master.

Shadow bound: In order to grant Cheeter his heightened intelligence, his shadow was magically removed. This resulted in him losing his natural instincts and mannerisms. Cheeter's resulting unhappiness gives him a -1 to all Will saves.

Saving throws: Familiars use the saving throws of their masters.

Graymalk (black cat)

"*The cat Graymalk came slinking about, pussyfoot, peering in our windows. Ordinarily, I have little against cats. I can take them or leave them, I mean. But Graymalk belongs to Crazy Jill who lives over the hill, in towards town, and Graymalk was spying for her mistress, of course. I growled to let her know she had been spotted.*"

- *A Night in the Lonesome October*, Roger Zelazny

Graymalk: Init +3; Atk bite +4 melee (1d6) or claws x2 (1d4); AC 14; HD 2d4+4; MV 40'; Act 1d20 or 2d16; SP animal speech, familiar (guardian), familiar traits, human speech, infravision 100', move silently, patron bond; SV *Special*; AL C.

Animal speech: As a familiar, Graymalk is capable of conversing with any other type of animal.

Familiar (guardian): Graymalk is able to provide assistance in the preparation of ritual magic and adds +1 to the resulting spell check. Unlike ordinary focal familiars, Graymalk's bond does not allow her mistress to see through her eyes. Graymalk has a d12 crit die and rolls on crit table III.

Human speech: From the hour of midnight until sunrise, Graymalk is capable of speaking to her mistress.

Patron bond: Graymalk is bonded to the High Purring One, the ancient patron of cats who dwells in a timeless portion of the Dreamlands known as the rose-crystal Palace of the Seventy Delights.

Move silently: Graymalk gains a +8 bonus to rolls involving silent movement. In addition, Graymalk grants her mistress a +4 bonus.

Saving throws: Familiars use the saving throws of their masters.

Needle (vampire bat)

"I heard a small tittering from the nearly bare branches of a cherry tree. I sniffed the air, but Nightwind's gritty signature was not on it. There was something else, though.

The small laughter—so high-pitched a human might not hear it—came again."

- *A Night in the Lonesome October*, Roger Zelazny

Needle: Init +3; Atk bite +1 melee (1d4); AC 14; HD 1d4+2; MV 5' or fly 100'; Act 1d20; SP animal speech, exceptional hearing, familiar (arcane), familiar traits, infravision 100', human speech; SV *Special*; AL C.

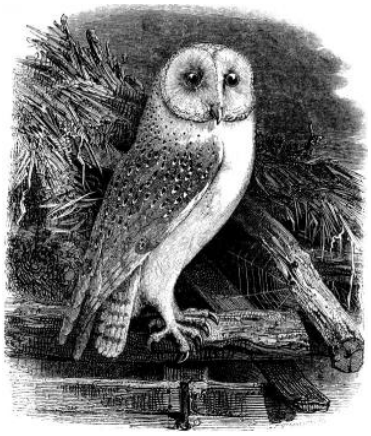
Animal speech: As a familiar, Needle is capable of conversing with any other type of animal.

Exceptional hearing: Needle gains a +8 bonus to rolls involving hearing. In addition, Needle grants his master a +4 bonus.

Familiar (arcane): As an arcane familiar, Needle is able to provide assistance in the preparation of ritual magic and adds +1 to the resulting spell check.

Human speech: From the hour of midnight until sunrise, Needle is capable of speaking to her mistress.

Saving Throws: Familiars use the saving throws of their masters.



Nightwind (barn owl)

"He swiveled his head around backwards to think, then said, "That sounds fair. It would save us all time. Very well. You know of my masters, and I know both of yours. That's four."
- A Night in the Lonesome October, Roger Zelazny

Nightwind: Init +3; Atk bite +1 melee (1d4); AC 14; HD 1d4+2; MV 10' or fly 100'; Act 1d20; SP animal speech, dual familiar, familiar (arcane), familiar traits, human speech, nightvision, patron bond; SV *Special*; AL C.

Animal speech: As a familiar, Nightwind is capable of conversing with any other type of animal.

Dual familiar: Nightwind is bonded to a pair of wizards and grants half of his hit point total to each of them.

Familiar (arcane): As an arcane familiar, Nightwind is able to provide assistance in the preparation of ritual magic and adds +1 to the resulting spell check for each of his masters.

Nightvision: Nightwind's vision at night is equal to that of a human in broad daylight and he can make out things from over a mile away. Nightwind shares nightvision 200' with his masters.

Human speech: From the hour of midnight until sunrise, Nightwind is capable of speaking to his masters.

Saving throws: Nightwind uses the higher of the available saving throws of his masters.

Quicklime (black snake)

"Quicklime wasn't readily available either, and I began rearing up and peering in windows. I spotted Rastov himself, slouched in a chair, vodka bottle in one hand, what might be his icon clutched to his breast with the other. Something stirred on the windowsill and I realized it to be my erstwhile partner. Quicklime raised his head, stared at me, then gestured with his head toward the adjacent room. At that, he slid from the sill and was gone..."
- A Night in the Lonesome October, Roger Zelazny

Quicklime: Init +1; Atk bite +4 melee (1d6); AC 14; HD 2d4+4; MV 50'; Act 1d20; SP animal speech, familiar (guardian), familiar traits, hide within, human speech, immune to damage from acid; SV *Special*; AL L.

Animal speech: As a familiar, Quicklime is capable of conversing with any other type of animal.

Familiar (guardian): Quicklime is able to provide assistance in the preparation of ritual magic and adds +1 to the resulting spell check. Unlike ordinary focal familiars, Quicklime's bond does not allow his master to see through his eyes. Quicklime has a d12 crit die and rolls on crit table III.

Hide within: Quicklime is capable of entering his master's body via the mouth and taking residence in the stomach.

Human speech: From the hour of midnight until sunrise, Quicklime is capable of speaking to his master.

Saving throws: Familiars use the saving throws of their masters.

Snuff (hound)

"I am a watchdog. My name is Snuff. I live with my master Jack outside of London now. I like Soho very much at night with its smelly fogs and dark streets. It is silent then and we go for long walks. Jack is under a curse from long ago and must do much of his work at night to keep worse things from happening. I keep watch while he is about it. If someone comes, I howl."

- *A Night in the Lonesome October*, Roger Zelazny

Snuff: Init +2; Atk bite +4 melee (1d6+1); AC 15; HD 3d4+6; MV 40'; Act 2d20; SP animal speech, familiar (guardian), familiar traits, heightened senses (smell), human speech, immune to charm, patron bond, ritual aid; SV *Special*; AL L.

Animal speech: As a familiar, Snuff is capable of conversing with any other type of animal.

Familiar (guardian): Snuff is able to provide assistance in the preparation of ritual magic and adds +1 to the resulting spell check. Unlike ordinary focal familiars, Snuff's bond does not allow his master to see through his eyes. Snuff has a d12 crit die and rolls on crit table III. Snuff's bite counts as a magic weapon.

Heightened senses (smell): As a dog, Snuff is capable of discerning a large number of scents and following an individual scent over great distances. Snuff receives +10 on rolls relating to scents.

Human speech: From the hour of midnight until sunrise, Snuff is capable of speaking to his master.

Patron bond: Snuff is bonded to Growler, the patron of dogs who dwells in a wooded portion of the Dreamlands known as "Dognappery", to the west of the River Shai and below the Gate of Deeper Slumber.

Ritual aid: Snuff is capable of working out complex spacial equations in his head and, in his mind's eye, can overlay them upon an image of nearby terrain. Snuff grants an additional +2 to the resulting spell check when ritual magic is performed in such locations.

Saving throws: Familiars use the saving throws of their masters.

Tekela (albino raven)

"I wandered for a little while after that, organizing my thoughts. My peregrinations took me past the church; a large albino raven regarding me, pink-eyed, from its peak."

- *A Night in the Lonesome October*, Roger Zelazny

Tekela: Init +2; Atk peck +1 melee (1d4); AC 14; HD 1d4+2; MV 10' or fly 60'; Act 1d20; SP animal speech, familiar (demonic), familiar traits, human speech, immune to disease, immune to poison, SV *Special*; AL C.

Animal speech: As a familiar, Tekela is capable of conversing with any other type of animal.

Familiar (demonic): Tekela is highly attuned to negative energy and corruption. Should her master roll a natural 1 on a spell check, half of any corruption is absorbed by Tekela, rounding in the wizard's favor. In addition, should Tekela's master die, his soul is transferred into her body as a cohabitant for all eternity.

Human speech: From the hour of midnight until sunrise, Tekela is capable of speaking to her master.

Saving throws: Familiars use the saving throws of their masters.

Don’t Get Too Attached:
Parasitic Familiars

“Want to dig me out? Fine, I’ll just burrow deeper. Organ meat is much tastier anyway.”

Nothing gets the skin to crawling like the sight of something…alien wriggling just underneath the skin. The faint tickle is a constant reminder that the microscopic fiend who decided you’d make a great host is always there, and just under the surface.

What if these parasites found their way into the primordial pool arcane Wizards use to draw forth their familiars? What if said parasite attached itself to that sleek black cat destined to seek you out for a lifetime bond, only to have its invasive “visitor” that, up til now, has remained dormant while waiting for the summons from an unsuspecting Wizard?

No one in their right mind would agree to a companion that makes the summoning Wizard a new home; thus parasitic familiars find and infect typical animals. They grow while slowly leeching the life away from the poor tortured beast until the familiar-to-be is summoned. Once the *find familiar* spell is cast and the called beast begins its journey, the parasite traveling within the Wizard’s future companion begins the final stage of infestation. In a horrific act, the parasite sucks the last ounce of life from the poor animal just as it arrives from the summoning.

The unsuspecting Wizard, more times than not, will investigate the carnage, often giving the parasitic organism a moment of surprise where it lashes out, infecting the new host. The end result is a Wizard with a familiar that takes as much as it gives.

Judges should consider “inserting” a parasitic familiar with Wizards who have bonded with patrons aligned with Chaos, or who have experienced the effects of corruption. Truly twisted players may request one of the vile travelers as well.

Below you’ll find three sample parasitic familiars, but the author encourages judges to create their own creepy parasites!

Cymothoa

The cymothoa is a microscopic crustacean that lurks in small ponds and similar bodies of water. When the unsuspecting animal stops for a drink, the creature uses tiny barbs to latch onto the soft tissue of the new host’s esophagus. The parasite slowly makes its climb back, until it finds and makes its final nesting spot; the poor animal’s tongue. The creature burrows with claws that also serve as microscopic straws, which it uses to slowly suck the blood from the host’s tongue. Over time, the tongue withers and falls away, leaving the cymothoa to burrow into the newly made space. Oddly enough, the creature attaches to the exposed nerve of the animal, acting as a surrogate tongue. The cymothoa continues to drain its host from this point, keeping the miserable creature alive by a thread until the time of summoning.

Once the Wizard investigates the strange death of the object of his summoning, the cymothoa bursts into a microscopic cloud of offspring. The Wizard inadvertently breathes in one of the vile parasites, which eventually works its way to the tongue of the new host. Once attached, the Wizard soon realizes his fate and gains the following “benefits”:

- 1d4+2 hit points, which also represent the familiar’s total.
- The Wizard is capable of casting d*etect magic*, but with a twist: the spell is channeled through the parasite and the determination of magic only comes from physically licking the objects in question. The process is unnerving to any who witness, resulting in a -1d penalty to any interaction rolls.
- The Wizard loses his tongue shortly after being infected by the parasite, but just as with the original host animal, the cymothoa attaches itself to remaining muscle and exposed nerve. The new tongue grants the Wizard a permanent +1 bonus to all spell checks, but he loses the ability to speak clearly. In crucial situations the Wizard will be unable to communicate efficiently. The Wizard also prefers to keep conversation to a minimum, lest his fellow adventurers see the poor soul has lost his tongue to the bloated chitin-form of the cymothoa

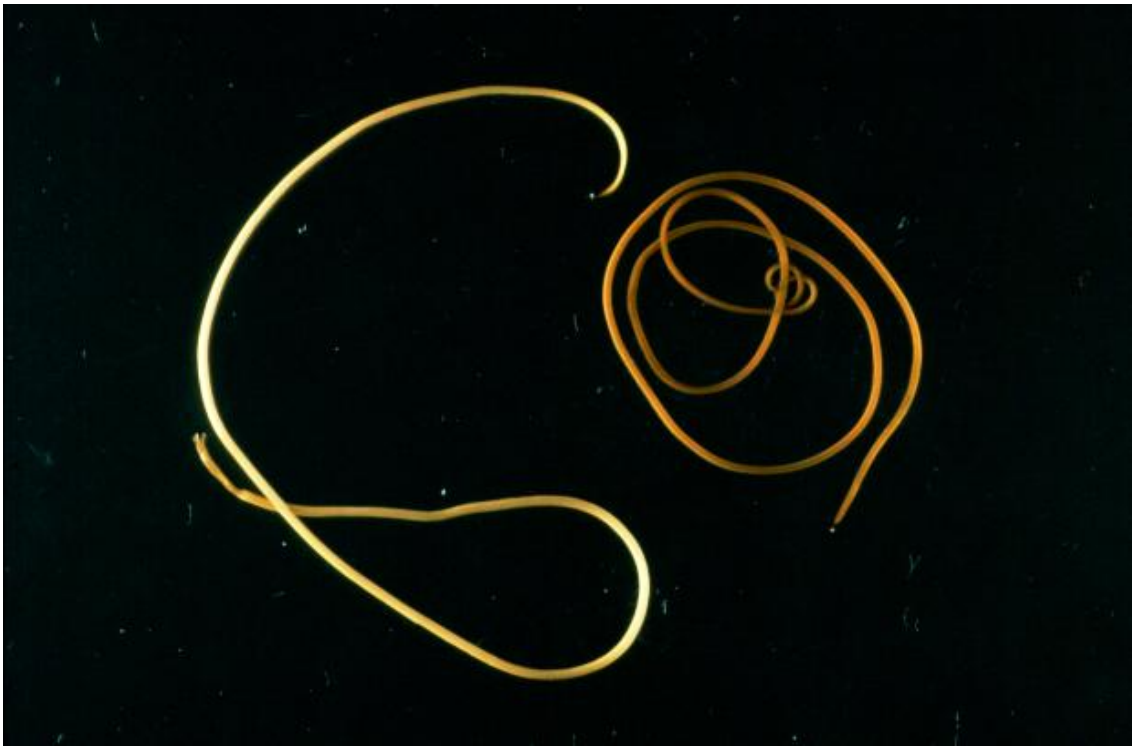
The cymothoa gains use of the Wizard’s saving throws, should it become subject to attack.

Filarial Worms

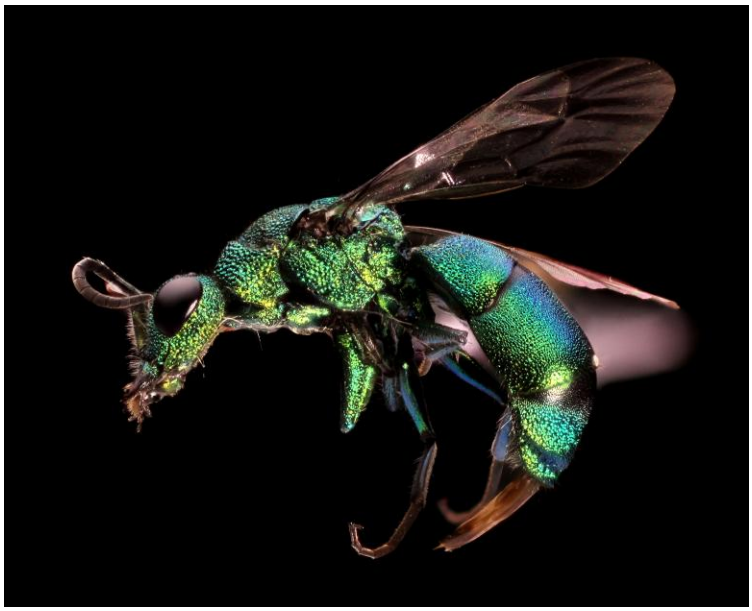
Filarial worms are delivered by way of the common mosquito. The vile colony starts as microscopic invaders of the host's lymphatic system, where they begin to feed and grow. Soon, the glands clog, preventing the lymph nodes from pushing excess fluids out of the body. Vessels begin to become obstructed and inflamed. The end result is an ever-worsening case of elephantitis. Once summoned, the hive-mind finish off the tortured animal being called, and they lie in wait to strike from the remains. The filarial strike with the speed of a jungle cat, springing out of the corpse with a reach of up to 4'. While hundreds to thousands lash out, only one worm is required to burrow and travel to the Wizard's lymphatic system. The infecting filarial immediately begin laying eggs to renew the colony of the hive-mind.

The infected Wizard soon begins to learn the extent of this infestation, as thousands of faint whispers begin to invade the psyche of the spellcaster. Wizards benefit from the following "benefits" of the communion:

- Both host and parasite gain 4d4+4 hit points.
- The Wizard gains +2 to AC, as his skin begins to swell and bulge, toughening up.
- Both host and parasite gain +3 to all Will-based saving throws. The Wizard is affectionately "one of the family," and harder to single out amongst the hive-mind of the worm colony.
- The Wizard may will one of the "family" out of his body, leaving it in some location where the vile parasite may be used in multiple ways. First, as a focus point for any spell the Wizard may normally cast: the Wizard may leave the worm where it remains immobile. The worm will remain alive for one day per level of the Wizard before drying out. The worm also serves a secondary role, as a telepathic extension of the Wizard: the worm relays sound and optical information of all that takes places within 60'. Filarial-infected Wizards are often sought out for their espionage-like abilities.
- As the worms giveth, the worms taketh away, and with each new level the Wizard finds his legs and genitals beginning to swell. The Wizard will suffer -5 to his movement rate at each new level. In addition, the poor soul begins to smell and become disfigured; in game terms this means a progressive -1 on the die chain to all reactionary rolls. When the host drops to 0 movement he can no longer move on his own, with the only option being to craft a cart or gain some other device that grants mobility.



Emerald Wasp



One of the more drastic parasitic creatures comes in the form of the emerald wasp. While most parasites seek to share the body of the host, the wasp seeks to invade the mind of the host, eventually consuming the jellied brain and leaving the Wizard an empty husk, under the control of an alien intelligence.

The wasp begins the cycle of infection by attacking an animal that it senses will soon be summoned as a familiar. The wasp, which is the size of a child's fist, attacks with the element of surprise by means of a sharp stinger. The first sting is often given on the spine of the animal, causing immediate paralysis. With the host effectively helpless, the parasite gingerly crawls to the forehead of the terrified animal. There it strikes with surgical precision, striking the cranium and destroying the majority of the brain. The wasp remains attached to its host, controlling any movement and directing the animal to feed, sleep, and perform other functions necessary to keep the body alive until the moment of summoning.

Once summoned, the wasp detaches and attacks the casting Wizard. The first strike paralyzes the unsuspecting Wizard, while the second sting acts to destroy all but the basic functions of the new host body. For all intents and purposes, the Wizard is replaced by an insect-like intelligence. The Wizard no longer feels emotion, nor does he have need for things that most would normally covet. The player now finds a unique challenge of playing a Wizard whose mind has been replaced by that of the wasp. The emerald wasp is highly intelligent and realizes the need to build a circle of allies in addition to accumulating power in order to better sustain survivability. Wasp-possessed Wizards are often considered distant and unemotional by those who adventure with them, but can't deny their natural prowess when channeling the arcane. Wizards infected by emerald wasps gain the following abilities:

- Both host and parasite gain 2d4+2 hit points.
- The Wizard gains the ability to communicate with insects. (Keep the intelligence of insects in mind when conveying any communication.)
- The Wizard gains one additional spell upon being infected. The spell is determined randomly.
- A large part of the Wizard's brain becomes a nesting and feeding ground for larvae of the wasp. This makes for unnerving buzzing that can be heard during quiet moments by all within 10'. Once per day, the Wizard can call forth a small swarm of male emerald wasps. The swarm occupies a space of 20'x20' and attacks all within the area of effect. The swarm disperses after 1d6 rounds.

Wasp swarm: Init +4; Atk sting +2 melee (20' x 20' area, 1d6 plus poison); AC 12; HD 5d8; hp 30; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP poison (DC 20 Fort save or target takes additional 1d6 damage); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0; AL N.

Magic Items

The Ripper's Blade

This +2 weapon communicates with its owner using empathy. It exists to prevent Cthulhu and the Great Old Ones from breaking through to the material world. It bonds to a particular owner, and grants that owner an extended lifespan of several centuries. The bonded owner can make it appear in his hand, or disappear into its sheath, at will, so long as the sheath is worn. When used in combat, it has a +1d bonus to critical hit results and increases the wielder's critical range by 2, so long as the foe is a servant or supporter of the Elder Gods.

The *Ripper's Blade* is one of the instruments used in the Great Game – a special ritual spell duel that occurs when a full moon falls upon Halloween. The Great Game is an attempt to open a path for the Great Old Ones to enter the material world. The *Ripper's Blade* is an artefact of the Closers, who oppose the Openers and attempt to keep the Elder Gods separated from our world. When used in the spell duel that culminates the Great Game, the *Ripper's Blade* grants a +2 bonus to the wielder's spell checks.

This artefact appears to be a long, razor- or scalpel-like blade, doing 1d5 damage (+2 due to enchantment).

Wolf Flower

If one has an interest in botany and diurnal-nocturnal plant cycles, one knows that very few plants in the world bloom in moonlight rather than sunlight. The *mariphasa lumina* is one of these exquisite rarities.

When *m. lumina* is housed in an environment with no exposure to sun or moon, the seemingly-boring plant withers. However, when kept near plants of the *dicotyledon* family, such as *lamium album* (the white dead-nettle), *m. lumina* blooms in the faintest of moonlight exposure, as if the dead-nettle enhances the dual-leafed plant's determination to flower. This property is enhanced when cross-pollinated with the dead-nettle: *m. lumina* takes on a soft phosphorescence at night.

If one has an interest in botany and folklore, one may deduce the plant to be associated with creatures that "bloom" in moonlight as well.

Some special green thumbs among humankind have had success in splicing/grafting the two plants together to create a crossbreed. This version, known to fanatics in the field as the *mariphasa lupina lumina*, neither blooms nor gives off bioluminescence on any given evening. Rather, it blooms just once per lunar cycle, glowing fiercely each time as if to match the bright face of the full moon. Thus it has earned the nickname, "wolf flower".

If one has an…"interest" in lycanthropes as well as botany, one may be driven to experimentation with the exotic and extremely fragile *mariphasa lupina lumina* in an attempt to control such a creature – or, in rare cases, to create one.

The proper dosage, once discovered by the interested individual, may allow an afflicted creature to stave off the primal call of the moon until its next "blooming" cycle, or at the very least, retain his human mental faculties and reasoning. It may also enable a human to assume the form of such a beast…but there are no guarantees in this little-explored field.

Monsters

The Experiment Man

The creation of the Good Doctor, the Experiment Man is a large, living humanoid created from corpses and artificial flesh. To creatures with good senses of smell, the Experiment Man reeks of death.

Experiment Man: Init +0; Atk slam +2 melee (1d4+4) or grapple +4 melee (1d5+4); AC 12; HD 4d12+8; hp 34; MV 30'; Act 1d20; SP grapple, immune to electrical attacks, damage resistance; SV Fort +6, Ref +0, Will +0; AL N.

The Experiment Man is extremely strong and durable, but is not overly intelligent. He has a +4 bonus for opposed Strength checks, and if grappling an opponent does automatic damage until that opponent can escape. The Experiment Man is immune to all damage from electricity, and reduces damage from all other sources by 2 points. Although considered an abomination of nature for the purposes of clerical turning, the Experiment Man is ***not*** un-dead.

The Thing in the Wardrobe

"The wardrobe doors were open. The Thing stood before it.

"Free!" it announced, flexing its limbs, furling and unfurling its dark, scaly wings. "Free!""

- *A Night in the Lonesome October*, Roger Zelazny

The Thing in the Wardrobe: Init +4; Atk claw +5 melee (1d7+3) or bite +5 melee (1d12); AC 12; HD 3d8+6; hp 20; MV 30' or fly 20'; Act 1d20; SP charm, demon traits, infravision 60'; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +2; AL C.

Charm: Through wheedling and flattery, the Thing in the Wardrobe can beguile and charm a target. Treat as c*harm person* with a spell check of 20.

Damage resistance: The Thing's tough, scaly hide protects the creature protection from mundane attacks. The Thing takes only half damage from non-magical attacks and fire.

The Thing in the Wardrobe is a sinister being summoned from "someplace else" to serve as fodder in Jack the Ripper's attempts to keep the gateway closed during the ritual of the great game.

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Coming Soon
Episode #18

The People of The Pit

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