

THE  
GHOSTLY  
LIBRARY

A  
Ravenloft  
GOTHIC EARTH

ADVENTURE FOR  
2ND-4TH LEVEL  
CHARACTERS

BY MRS C. EVANS







# Credits

Designer: Cat Evans

Editor: Liz Gist

Cover Art: Envato elements

Interior Art: All licensed under CC0

Layout: Cat Evans

“Playing in Gothic Earth” taken from Oliver Clegg’s excellent adventure Cliffhanger Abbey, and reprinted here with permission.

Special thanks: Jay Griffiths & Noah Grand for beta reading and insights; M. T. Black and the aforementioned Oliver Clegg for turning Gothic Earth loose on DMs Guild; Jay Hulme (@jayhulmepoet on Twitter) for his thought provoking threads on Victorian customs.

Thank you for downloading this adventure! I hope it’s everything you want from a gothic horror adventure and that you and your players enjoy it. If you do, please consider leaving a rating or review, and looking up some more of our releases.

If you want to talk, you can find me on Twitter as @perpetualgloom

DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, D&D, Wizards of the Coast, Forgotten Realms, Ravenloft, the dragon ampersand, and all other Wizards of the Coast product names, and their respective logos are trademarks of Wizards of the Coast in the USA and other countries.

This work contains material that is copyright Wizards of the Coast and/or other authors. Such material is used with permission under the Community Content Agreement for Dungeon Masters Guild.

All other original material in this work is copyright 2019 by Catherine Evans, published under the Community Content Agreement for Dungeon Masters Guild.

# Foreword

The cover may have already tipped you off, but this isn’t a standard D&D adventure. It’s set in Gothic Earth, which parallels our own world at the end of 19th century. The focus is on investigating and unraveling a mystery rather than fighting - though fighting is a definite possibility.

Ghostly occurrences and tangled secrets are stories Gothic Earth is made to tell, and if you’re looking for something a little less high fantasy and a little more creeping horror, I hope you’ll enjoy The Ghostly Library.

# Contents

|                                |    |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Welcome to Gothic Earth        | 4  |
| Playing in Gothic Earth        | 5  |
| Background                     | 7  |
| The Ghostly Library            | 8  |
| Appendix A: NPCs & Items       | 15 |
| Appendix B: Amended Spell List | 16 |





# Welcome to Gothic Earth

## Content Warnings

This is a horror adventure. It deals with the exploitation of the working-class poor, violence against women, violation of the dead, and books bound in human skin. I have tried to treat these matters respectfully but if their presence will be upsetting to you or any of your players, consider playing a different module. Horror is enjoyable only with consent.

While this is not a gory or 'jump scare' type of horror – it has more in common with the ghost stories of M.R. James – sensitive subjects and scary situations require safety tools. If you are unfamiliar with RPG safety tools, this article by The Gauntlet is a great place to start:

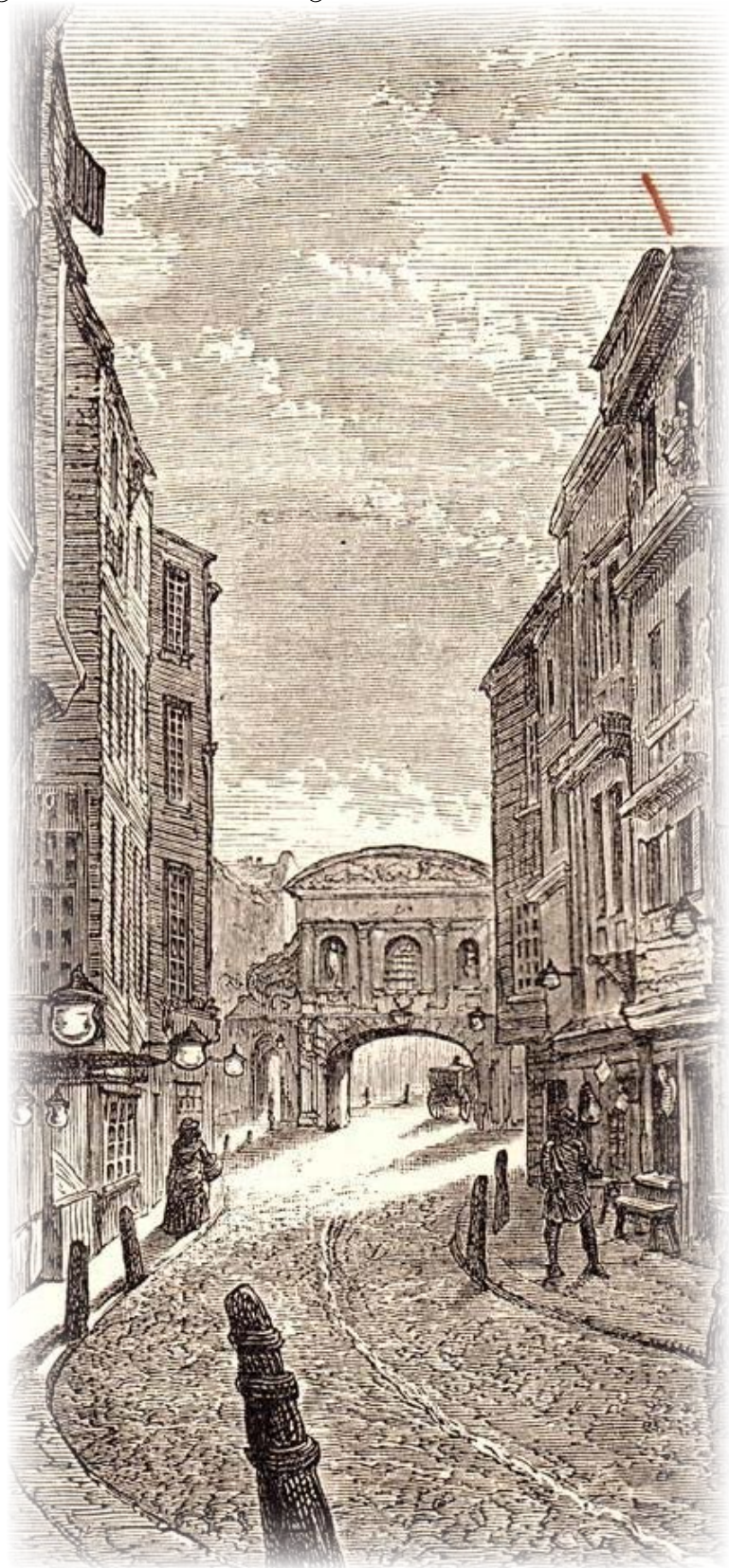
<https://www.gauntlet-rpg.com/tools-of-the-table.html>

## Lethality in Gothic Earth

Gothic Earth is dangerous. Characters are mere mortals, and the threats they face are evil and supernatural. Worse, the world is very much on the monsters' side.

In a traditional game of 5th edition Dungeons & Dragons it is very hard for characters to die. When they do, resurrection magic makes it a temporary pitfall. Not so in Gothic Earth. Combat here is dangerous, injury traumatic, and the chance of a mistake leading to permanent character death is high.

Characters can negotiate The Ghostly Library without a single fight, making level irrelevant. In fact, it is suggested for relatively low-level characters so that they are inclined to do so. Should they choose violence as their primary tool, they are at serious risk of one or more fatalities.





# Playing in Gothic Earth

## What is Gothic Earth?

Gothic Earth is a world much like ours, isolated from all other planes by a mysterious dark power. It is not, strictly speaking, a domain of Ravenloft. Or, at least, scholars in the topic differ on the matter. All that matters is that Gothic Earth is a strange mirror of our own, laced with dark monsters, evil magic and frozen in a period of time that vaguely reflects the 1890s. Characters are whisked away to and from Gothic Earth just as they are to any other domain of Ravenloft, often to a bitter and unsatisfying end.

## Character Classes and Subclasses

Gothic Earth attempts to evoke a Victorian, gothic horror feel, but no classes or subclasses are restricted. Instead, consider re-flavoursing classes that may seem jarring to fit the aesthetic your campaign is going for. For instance, your Drunken Master monk, instead of being influenced by eastern tropes, might instead be a drunken sailor with a sore head and enough dumb luck to fool the devil.

## Magic in Gothic Earth

Gothic Earth resides in its own plane, isolated from all others. No spell, not even a Wish spell, allows one to escape. Astral Projection, Teleport and all similar spells cast with the intent of leaving Gothic Earth simply fail, as do all effects that banish a creature to another plane of existence, which instead spirit affected creatures to a random location on Gothic Earth for their duration. These restrictions apply to magic items and artifacts. Magic that allows transit to the Border Ethereal is the exception to this rule. A creature that enters the Border Ethereal from Gothic Earth is pulled back into Gothic Earth upon leaving that plane.

Magic is strange in Gothic Earth. Spells of fire and thunder are far less common than curses and augmentations. The world of Gothic Earth shuns flashier displays of magic, tending instead towards the subtle movements more easily disguised as coincidence or providence. Amended spell lists for Spellcasting classes are provided in the Appendices. Creatures drawn into Gothic Earth from other worlds find they are unable to remember or prepare spells not on this list whilst on Gothic Earth. Any such spell inscribed in spellbooks or onto a scroll appears as gibberish whilst on Gothic Earth.

## Firearms and Armour

Firearms have been commonplace in Gothic Earth for quite some time. Re-imagining crossbows as pistols and rifles (while retaining their in-game statistics) keeps play moving and avoids learning a batch of new rules. However, firearms have one significant advantage over less sophisticated ranged weapons: firearms ignore non-magical armour. Dexterity, magic items, and spells such as mage armor function normally against firearms.

## The Red Death

Magic is wrong on Gothic Earth. Dreadfully wrong. In the ancient past, something evil slipped through the cracks in reality in unknown circumstances, and began to poison the leylines of magic that criss cross the earth. Unopposed for long years, it squats like a hideous spider over the web of magic, and taints every spell cast on the plane. Furthermore, it hungers for the souls of magic users, seeking to corrupt them and steal their delicious life essence for itself. The shadow of the Red Death lies heavy on Gothic Earth, and has caused the plane to take on some unusual traits.

## Dark Powers Checks

Consider using Honor in your Ravenloft campaign as a way of determining the sway the Dark Powers have over any character as a result of their actions. Honor is a barometer for how tightly the dark powers cling to any particular soul. If creating new characters for a Ravenloft campaign, you may allow characters to roll an extra ability score/spend some of their points on increasing their starting Honor score. See the Dungeon Master's Guide, Chapter 9: Dungeon Master's Workshop for rules on Honor. In Ravenloft, an Honor Saving throw is called a Dark Powers check.

In Gothic Earth having a character make an Honor saving throw when a character comes into direct contact with magic, or uses it for their own ends. Set the DC in accordance with how likely you think the occurrence is to have drawn the attention of the Red Death. On a failure, reduce that character's current Honor score by 1.

If the character's Honor score ever falls below half of their Spellcasting Ability score, they become an evil NPC under the Dungeon Master's Control and are removed from play. Characters who do not utilise magic for their own ends need not fear corruption by the Red Death, but they may find themselves at its mercy without the Art to protect them.

## Dark Supremacy

In some places on Gothic Earth, where the influence of monsters and magic lies most heavily, mortal magic gutters in the face of true evil. No regional or lair effect can be dismissed or counteracted by mortal magic. In addition, when a spell is resisted by an evil creature's Legendary Resistance trait, the creature that cast the spell must immediately make a Dark Powers check.

## Parasitic Siphon

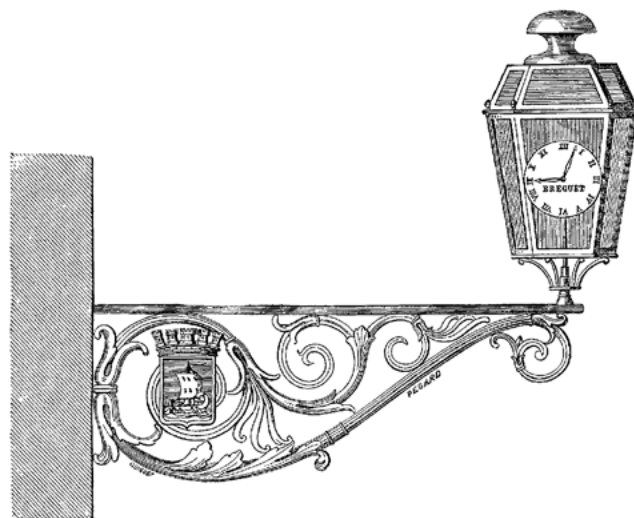
The Red Death draws magic to it through ley-lines, disrupting magical spells as they are cast and making it harder for spellcasters to safely

work their magic. When a creature attempts to cast a spell of 1st level or higher, that creature must succeed on a Spellcasting Ability check equal to 10+ the level of the spell being cast. On a failed check, the spell fails to cast and both the action and the spell slot used to cast the spell are wasted. If a creature ever rolls a 1 on this check, the spell backfires in a spectacular manner determined by the Dungeon Master.

As if this were not enough, the casting time of every spell is increased to represent the difficulty of working magic on Gothic Earth. The usual rules for casting spells over several rounds apply.

| Listed Casting Time | Gothic Earth Casting Time |
|---------------------|---------------------------|
| Reaction            | Reaction                  |
| 1 bonus action      | 1 action                  |
| 1 action            | 2 actions                 |
| 1 minute            | 10 minutes                |
| 10 minutes          | 1 hour                    |
| 1 hour              | 8 hours                   |
| 8 hours             | 24 hours                  |
| 24 hours            | 24 hours                  |

See the Appendix for amended spell lists for magic users in Gothic Earth.





# Back ground

Dr. Henry Fitzroy is a genteel man of science living in the relatively green and pleasant suburbs of London. Polite to his neighbours and a generous philanthropist, he has spent his time since graduating from the University of Cambridge researching diseases of the respiratory system in factory workers of the East End of London. He runs a free medical clinic in the slums of Bethnal Green, is happily married, and is by all accounts a reasonably good man.

He also has a small but growing collection of books lovingly bound in human skin.

Henry dissects a number of cadavers in the course of his research, and has come to understand that they are not just useful objects of study but also pieces of art. The skin of a young woman's back, in particular, he considers a thing of beauty. And so he uses them to bind some of his most precious books. Research notes, favourite novels or scientific texts... even in one case, a book of highly illicit pornography.

The rightful owners of these book-bindings, the East End women from whose corpses they were taken, are increasingly displeased by this. Individually, their spirits are not particularly powerful; in their ever-growing numbers, they have become able to act. By temporarily possessing Henry's associates – his wife, his friends, his neighbours, even passing ruffians in the street – they are making his life miserable.

Henry believes himself to be cursed, and has called in a group of experts to help remedy his situation. Enter the player characters...

## Dramatis Personae

**Dr Henry Fitzroy** – the good doctor. Scientist, philanthropist, and owner of a rather ghoulish library.

**Mrs. Eva Fitzroy** – his wife. Currently recovering from an episode of “hysteria” with her mother in Switzerland.

**Dr Dennis Selcon** – Henry's friend and confi-

dant.

**Ms. Dorothea Sisal** – Henry & Eva's neighbour. A curtain-twitching busybody.

**Martin Poulter** – an East End labourer. Currently in custody, awaiting sentencing for an attack on Dr Fitzroy.

**Sally Quigley** – the first woman to become part of Dr Fitzroy's library. Not entirely displeased by it, but unhappy at sharing the status with others.

**Rosie Boyle** – the second addition to Fitzroy's library. Revolted by it, and determined to make him see the error of his ways.

**Lucie Poulter** – the third addition, now Fitzroy's spellbook. Offended, angry, and vengeful. She doesn't care a whit about getting Fitzroy to stop, she wants him dead for what he did to her body.

**Nancy, Susannah, and Maddie** – other additions to the collection. They don't retain as much self-awareness as the other women, but contribute their power to hauntings.

## Adventure Outline

In Part 1, the characters are convened in Dr Fitzroy's home to discuss gainful employment.

In Part 2, they follow up assorted leads to better understand the good doctor's supposed ‘curse.’

In Part 3, their sources lead them back to the doctor, armed with the knowledge of what he has done.

In Part 4, the characters must decide on and implement a solution to the problem – or simply leave the doctor to suffer.

Adventure Hook(s)

The adventure assumes that the characters have survived previous adventures and gained a degree of notoriety in the ‘right’ circles. Dr Fitzroy has heard of them and contacted them to deal with ‘a problem of a supernatural strain.’ The DM may wish to forge a stronger connection by giving the characters and Dr Fitzroy a connection in common, using an NPC from a previous adventure or a character's background as a means to put them in contact.

# The Ghostly Library

## Part 1: Polite Conversation

Read or paraphrase the following:

*It is a chilly, drizzly, afternoon when you make your way to Dr Fitzroy's Hampstead home. It stands on a wide street of new, red-brick buildings in an affluent and leafy suburb, and it might as well be a world away from the teeming, overcrowded centre of London. The front garden is well-tended and in good order, but the curtains at all of the windows are closed.*

The maidservant who leads you into the drawing room is quiet and withdrawn, and departs quickly after she leaves you seated on green leather chairs in the dark, finely furnished room, surrounded by Dr Fitzroy's books and plants and a pair of very fine human skeletons.

The characters are served tea, and left alone for a couple of minutes until...

*The gentleman himself arrives. He is younger than you might at first take him for, given his haggard countenance, unshaven cheeks, and red-rimmed eyes. He might otherwise be handsome – tall and sandy haired, and well-dressed – but his evident exhaustion precludes that currently.*

## Symptoms & Diagnosis

Dr Fitzroy explains how he came to hear about the characters – either through contacts at his club in the city ('The Inquisitive Fellowship of St. James' – a group of like-minded gentlemen who meet to discuss science, medicine, and spiritualism as it relates to those topics), or through a mutual friend (see 'Adventure Hooks').

He relates the tale of his recent troubles calmly and dispassionately, though it causes him some visible distress to reflect on it. For the last three weeks, the people closest to him have turned against him.

- It began three weeks ago with a neighbour – an otherwise respectable, elderly, woman named Dorothea – painting a slogan on the back wall of his garden. It read "ENOUFF IS ENUFF." She claimed not to recall doing it,

while there was still red paint on her hands. A couple of nights later she struck again, this time with "REPENT SINNER."

- Two weeks ago, his wife Eva tried to smother him in his sleep with a pillow. Afterwards she was distraught, repentant, and hysterical. She has gone to recuperate with her mother, in Switzerland.
- After that, matters quieted until, one week ago, when he left the clinic he runs in the slums of the East End, a man assaulted and attempted to stab him. That man, Martin Poulter, is now in custody.
- This matter is a high priority for Fitzroy. He will pay the characters £200 in total for their services: £50 up front (he has the cash on his person), and the rest on a successful resolution.

Fitzroy believes he has been cursed. He thinks it may relate to a book of eastern European folktales he acquired in an auction a month ago. It is a rare and precious volume, currently disassembled and awaiting rebinding. He 'hasn't found the right leather yet; it needs something really special.' He will happily show the characters the pages, which he keeps in a locked wooden box, allowing them to inspect them as they wish. He will even allow them to take the book off the premises as long as they are willing to provide a signed note stating that they will take care of it and be liable for any harm that comes to it while in their possession.

The book is a macabre, but utterly mundane, collection of vampire stories called 'Tales from the Mists.' It is several hundred years old, and worth about £100.

## Development

Characters now have several leads to follow up, all of which are detailed in Part 2: Pointed Questions.



## Part 2: Pointed Questions

### The Maid

Characters may wish to speak to Daphne. Fitzroy has no objection to them doing so. If they ask for his permission, he will summon her to the drawing room and leave the characters alone with her.

Daphne (Lawful Good human **commoner**, she/her) is visibly uncomfortable in the drawing room. She says as little as possible, and is shy and withdrawn. All ability checks to charm/persuade/befriend her are made with disadvantage, while attempts at Intimidation are made with advantage.

If characters seek her out privately, they find her in the small, neat kitchen – hard at work peeling vegetables for dinner (she is the Fitzroy's only servant). Daphne is much more comfortable and talkative here: attempts to intimidate her are made with disadvantage, and speaking to her as an equal means checks to persuade etc. are made with advantage.

If persuaded by ability checks (contested by the relevant ability/skill), or after good roleplaying on the players' part, Daphne reveals that:

- She was in the house for the first several incidents. She was there when Dr Fitzroy found the paint on the walls the mornings after the vandalism took place and was woken up by Mrs Fitzroy's screaming after she attempted to smother her husband in his sleep.
- Everything is as Fitzroy said. He has neither hidden nor misrepresented anything that happened.
- As far as she knows, Ms Sisal was always cordial with the Fitzroys and had no reason to act as she did.
- Eva Fitzroy is an intelligent woman and a loving wife.
- Daphne firmly believes Fitzroy is a good man. He runs a free clinic in the slums of the East End to help "those poor lost souls."
- Daphne recommends that the characters speak with Dr Fitzroy's friend and fellow club member, Dr Selcon. She knows Fitzroy has discussed matters with him and he may have other insights.
- If characters are exceptionally successful at befriending (charming, threatening, etc.)

Daphne (achieving a total of 20 or higher on a relevant ability check), she admits that she finds the doctor's work "a little eerie," and that she doesn't enjoy being alone with him now his wife is gone. She doesn't believe he'd hurt her... but he does take apart young ladies' bodies for science, and sometimes she thinks he catches him... looking at her.

### The Neighbour

The house next door to Dr Fitzroy's is very similar to his. The same style and materials; inside, the floor plan is a mirror of what the characters have seen already. Ms Sisal is a doddering, elderly lady with dyed red hair who lives entirely alone (she has a housekeeper and a gardener, a married couple who come in twice a week each to keep the place tidy). There is no Mr Sisal. He was cremated 17 years ago.

Ms Sisal looks even more haunted than Fitzroy. She is disoriented, her attention wanders, and she jumps at shadows. She's not terribly certain of the date, or who the king is, or other minor details. Whatever the characters tell her about their reasons for visiting, she asks them to repeat them at least two more times over the course of their conversation.

Getting Ms Sisal to talk requires patience and persistence. If characters lose their temper or threaten her, she orders them out of her house. She will subsequently inform the police, who will speak to Fitzroy, who will be most displeased but tell them how to contact the characters. There is no real consequence to this until/unless the characters do something illegal, but it will certainly prompt some questions when the investigating officers find out they have visited Martin Poulter.

Ms Sisal knows:

- She has no memory of defacing her neighbour's property but accepts that she did so; she has already paid for cleaning. She's unclear whether she did so once or twice, or more.
- She is, however, absolutely certain that she would never have spelled such simple words so poorly.
- She is terrified of anyone finding out that she had these 'lapses': her son James will have her committed to an asylum so he can take her money.

- She does, however, know that Dr Fitzroy is in the habit of having young women visit his home in the afternoon, when his wife calls on friends. He claims they are “anatomical models” but Ms Sisal knows full well that the focus of his research is lungs “and how on God’s green earth is he inspecting those through their bosoms, eh?”

## The Ruffian

The man who attacked Dr Fitzroy in Bethnal Green is Martin Poulter, and he is in jail in that neighbourhood, awaiting sentence for his crime.

Read or paraphrase:

*Hampstead is to Bethnal Green as heaven is to hell. Narrow alleys and factory smoke replace trees and room to breathe. There are too many people here, all watching you like visitors from another world as you find your way through mazes of streets and dead-ends to the grey stone police station that stands tall and square amongst the listing tenements and bloated poorhouses.*

Bethnal Green is not necessarily a dangerous area: most people here are working too hard to keep body and soul together to really interfere with outsiders. However, it should feel dangerous. The characters are being watched, and if they cause any trouble, a group of locals will arrive to see them off (6 True Neutral human **bandits**).

Getting in to see Poulter will require a convincing fiction (e.g. religious folks concerned for his soul); DM’s discretion. Bribery is a possibility but if the attempt fails, the characters have lost all chance of meeting Poulter short of using magic or powerful connections.

Poulter looks older than he should. Tired, haggard, not sleeping well, hair streaked with grey... this is becoming a trend amongst the people associated with Fitzroy.

- He knows Fitzroy as the gentleman who “plunders the local morgue” as well as running the medical clinic out of a chapel on Swain Street. He bears Fitzroy a certain amount of ill will: his sister died of tuberculosis and he knows her body went to Fitzroy to be “cut up and picked apart and denied a decent burial,” but he swears he had no intention of killing him.

- He doesn’t know what came over him. When he saw Fitzroy leaving the chapel one afternoon, he lost control; it was suddenly like Lucie was right there with him again.
- Seized by rage and disgust, he ran screaming at Fitzroy and attempted to stab him with a pocket knife.
- He heard the screams coming out of his own mouth, but it wasn’t his voice. Higher, almost... girlish. And he called Fitzroy a sinner and a ghoul, which is certainly not something he would say about the fellow: he would have used more foul language.

## The Club

Fitzroy’s club is in a back street in the West End. It’s underground. It’s dimly lit, with a public bar (where the drinks are expensive and strong) and a number of private rooms for members’ use, and it is – unusually – not gentlemen only (though women members are rare).

Getting into the club is difficult. It is strictly members only, and the doormen ask for a password at the door (the password this month is *theosophy*; characters can obtain it from Dr Fitzroy).

There are two doormen, both looking like they might be bare knuckle boxers when they finish their shifts here. One (Lawrence; True Neutral human **thug**, he/him) is open to bribery; the other (Smith; Lawful Neutral human **thug**, he/him) is scrupulously honest and takes his job seriously. Smith will refuse entry to anyone he suspects of being a ‘snooper’ (his word for journalists), including people asking too many questions or offering bribes. He will be more easily persuaded if characters can convince him they are working on behalf of a club member, and trying to protect the best interests of the club.

- Once inside, all members assume the characters are guests of another member and talk freely with them.
- Everyone knows of Fitzroy’s troubles – after all, the club is how he acquired contact info for the characters - but not in any detail. He’s a perfectly respectable scientist, and a man who does not deserve this (after all, he runs that free clinic in Bethnal Green). Some suspected it was a delusion until he was stabbed.
- Fitzroy is generally considered a fine man: intelligent, respected, and decent – though pos-



sessed of a somewhat dark sense of humour. That is, however, not uncommon amongst medics.

- As well as being missed at the club, most members joke about the damage his absence must be doing to the brothel a few doors down: he is known to regularly hire girls there for house calls.
- Club members will refer the characters to Selcon (a large, bearded man with a hooked nose and a strong hint of a Russian accent) to really talk.
- Selcon does not believe in a curse. It's simply not rational. However, he does confirm that Fitzroy has told him the exact same stories as the characters.
- Selcon knows that his friend has a specific preference in cadavers. He doesn't suspect anything... untoward... but he has noted that for the past several months, every cadaver he has seen 'Fitz' work on has been a young woman. Not necessarily attractive, but young (late teens and early twenties, broadly speaking).
- Selcon also knows that Fitz gets his cadavers from a morgue in Bethnal Green. It's convenient to his work in the clinic, and he likes that the small sum of money he pays for research subjects goes into this poor community where it can do some good.
- If characters fail to gain entry to the club, Selcon leaves shortly afterwards. Characters who approach and speak with him can obtain all of the information as above.

## The Book

Taking the book might be the characters' first exposure to the supernatural. On the first night

the characters have the book in their possession, they have terrible dreams. Nothing visual, but a sense of being powerless, trapped, and abused. Anger, even hatred, focused on Dr Fitzroy. When the characters wake, they each have a grey streak in their hair. They must each succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw or reduce their maximum hit points by 2.

On the second night, they are visited by a circle of six spectral figures (the six ghosts of the library), and shown a vision of Fitzroy. Not doing anything particularly offensive... just reading). They wake with more grey streaks in their hair, and this time the DC for the saving throw is 14. The visitation (and saving throw) repeats every night the characters have the book unless precautions are taken to prevent it (e.g. a protection from good and evil spell or similar Abjuration magic).

The book contains no information relevant to Fitzroy's case but you are welcome to seed it with clues for further adventures. It was bought at reputable auction house Sowerby's, who have provenance for it dating back at least the last hundred years. It came from the estate of a Greek gentleman who died in Surrey at the age of 92. He had the book in his possession for almost 50 years.

## Development

Various sources will lead the characters to the morgue, or the girls who visit Fitzroy for Part 3. If characters are floundering, the return of Eva Fitzroy should set them on the right path.

Some players will jump to the right conclusions faster than others. Some may have already started to suspect Dr Fitzroy this point. If they investigate his library, they will find several books that have been recently bound in fresh leather (see pg. 13) but probably can't identify that the leather is human skin.

Fitzroy is not at all ashamed of his collection: he's actually rather proud of it, and will happily tell the characters everything if they enquire. He will require some kind of evidence to believe that his books are haunted, which should lead characters through at least some of Part 3. See "Confronting Fitzroy" on pg. 14 for what happens once Fitzroy fully understands and believes.

## Part 3: Perplexing Discoveries

### The Morgue

The morgue is on Swain Street, close to both the chapel where Fitzroy runs his clinic and the jail in which Poulter is imprisoned.

When characters visit the morgue, read or paraphrase:

*The morgue is less like a place of rest and more like a warehouse. Windowless and undecorated, the outside of the building is bleakness personified.*

When they enter, read or paraphrase:

*Inside, the morgue is no more auspicious than its exterior. Lit only by gas lamps kept at the lowest possible flame, it is cold as an ice box and silent as the grave except for your own shuffling footsteps and the light tread of Mrs Rudge. The twin odours of the place are unmistakable: decaying flesh, and burned remains.*

The morgue is staffed only by one attendant, Mrs Harriet Rudge (Neutral Good human **commoner**, she/her). She is a short, briskly efficient local woman who knows full well her job is to supply corpses to various dissectionists to bring in some money to offset the costs of cremating these paupers. Harriet is a firm believer in science, and is glad that at least this way, the poor men and women of Bethnal Green “leave something behind to show they were here.”

She is very impressed by any scientific credentials, real or imagined, and if approached in this manner, will reveal all of the information below without need for an ability check. Otherwise, make contested rolls using appropriate skills.

- Yes, Fitzroy is known here. Harriet can provide names of all of the cadavers he’s taken (including the women listed in the NPCs section).
- In fact, they’ve got a cadaver to send his way. He hasn’t requested her but they know it’s his type. Harriet is willing to show her to the characters.
- The ‘specimen’ is unremarkable: a young woman, probably still a teenager (Martha Bailey, aged 18. Mother of two, barmaid). A DC 12 Intelligence (Medicine) check reveals that she has borne children, that she died of tuberculosis, but that she was otherwise healthy.

- Martha has exquisite, flawless skin. A soft olive complexion, and no moles or birthmarks. Harriet can confirm that this is Dr Fitzroy’s preference: “all the marks of health.”
- While Harriet respects – is even awed by – Dr Fitzroy as a man of science, she also finds him slightly weird. He has refined his interest from ‘any cadavers who died of lung disease’ to ‘young woman in good condition (who had some kind of lung disease)’.
- He returns the remains for burning without their lungs – understandable – but also with unusual adjustments: he removes the skin from their torsos. Harriet assumes that there is a medical reason for this, but no other gentleman of science has ever handled bodies this way, to her knowledge.
- At this, the girl on the slab, sits up, gasps as if drawing in one awful, rattling breath, and cries, “Don’t let him bind me!”

Even if characters are not in the same room as the corpse when this happens, they can hear the cry from anywhere in the morgue.

This is not Martha, it’s the ghost of Rosie Boyle. This one line from the dead woman is all she can manage. After that, she flees the corpse but remains in the room. Rosie is visible as a vaguely feminine, spectral, form. She throws objects – urns, trolleys, even other cadavers – in a frenzy of poltergeist activity for the next minute. Anyone in the same room must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 3 (1d6) points of bludgeoning damage every 6 seconds/at the beginning of their turn.

Rosie is a **ghost**. Characters may choose to fight her, or simply leave her to her own devices, but she cannot coherently communicate with them. If she is defeated here, she will return to Fitzroy’s library.





No rules are provided for seances, but it would be entirely appropriate for the characters to try and conduct one. Lucie, Rosie, or Sally could all be summoned easily, and can explain exactly why they hold such a grudge against the doctor. They express their wishes to have the books destroyed but cannot be dissuaded from pursuing their vendetta.

However, this is Gothic Earth: ghosts are not the only things attracted to a séance. There is a 25% chance that a ritual also summons an **arcanaloth** which thanks the characters for summoning it, and takes a long term interest in them. It requires services and obedience from the characters until they somehow manage to defeat or dismiss it. In combat, the arcanaloth largely shrugs off characters' attacks, and fights only to subdue them. It wants servants, not bodies.

It can tell them the facts surrounding Dr Fitzroy's case, but it will not do so for free (it would be appropriate for at least one character to take a level in Warlock next time they advance, and also to make some Dark Powers checks).

## The Girls

Characters may wish to visit the brothel on the same street as Fitzroy's club. They might be directed there by Fitzroy's maid, Daphne, or by a member of his club. Unlike the club, Mrs Mitchell's Parlour welcomes visitors. It is a perfectly nice, though on the small side, house in the West End. Two stories, kept in good repair. The furniture is a little dated and the curtains are kept closed, but it is a comfortable, unexceptional place.

Mrs Mitchell, the proprietor, is a handsome woman in her fifties, well-spoken and polite. She – or any of her ladies, but especially a long-standing employee named Polly (a tall, pale brunette with porcelain skin, who swears like a sailor and laughs at her own jokes) – will cheerfully discuss Dr Fitzroy (though they know nothing of his 'curse').

- Several girls who work for Mrs Mitchell have visited him. They try not to do so more than once. He makes them sit naked, with their backs to him, in a room full of skeletons and cadavers while he sits at his desk and writes. Nobody wants to go back. Every single one of

them has a bad feeling about him, and most are absolutely sure that one day he is going to kill someone.

- He doesn't have sex with the women he hires. He seems to like having them as decoration while he works – a kind of aesthetic flourish – but there is something oppressive and unpleasant about his home and his strange interest in them.
- Dr Fitzroy hasn't hired any company for the last three weeks.

## The Wife

Eva Fitzroy returns when the characters have exhausted all other leads (or investigated as much as they are inclined to). She contacts the characters via a letter: she corresponded with Selcon by telegram prior to returning to London, and she wishes to talk to the people investigating her husband's situation. If the characters have not spoken to Selcon, he knows from Fitzroy and their friends at the club that the characters have been hired.

Eva is plump and confident; very intelligent and articulate, and used to being treated with respect. Suggestions that – for example – she is "hysterical" will be met with sharp rebukes and a frosty, imperious attitude. Otherwise, she conveys her story as clearly, concisely, and objectively as she is able.

- She has had some considerable time to think over her experience, and she had the benefit of speaking with a psychoanalyst in Switzerland.
- Eva remembers what happened the night she attempted to murder her husband. She was not herself. She was a woman named Lucie – but also, simultaneously, many other women. Rosie. Sally. Others. She was angry at something Henry had done to her... to her body... he makes them into books. Beautiful books. Beautiful skin-cases for beautiful knowledge.
- Eva is appalled at her husband's collection. She fully intends to burn the books and wants the characters' help to do so.
- She knows which books in her husband's collection are currently bound in skin:
  1. Two volumes of his own research notes (*Nancy and Maddie*)
  2. An eighteenth century treatise on the function of the lungs (*Sally Quigley*)
  3. A copy of *The Magus*, a text about magical

- practice, containing certain tried and tested rituals (this is Fitzroy's spellbook. See the Appendix for its contents) (*Lucie Poulter*)
4. A collection of 16th century folk and fairy tales (*Rosie Boyle*)
  5. One volume of French pornography (words and images) (*Susannah*)

## Part 4: Possible Solutions

Armed with all of the information, what the characters do next is entirely up to them.

The characters may well conclude that Dr Fitzroy has done nothing wrong – or nothing so wrong that he deserves to be haunted for the rest of his life. In this case, a ritual of exorcism can be researched and performed. Its efficacy is determined by the result of an Intelligence (Religion) or Intelligence (Arcana) check. The higher the outcome of the check, the fewer ghosts the characters will have to face during the exorcism:

- DC 15: the characters face only ghosts, not the poltergeists.
- DC 18: the characters face only the ghosts of Rosie and Lucie.
- DC 20 or higher: the characters face only Lucie.

Murdering Dr Fitzroy (see Appendix for his stat block) for his actions will certainly satisfy the ghosts. Their spirits will move on to peaceful eternal rest. Fitzroy is a mage as well as a medic and will definitely put up a fight.

However, the characters have murdered a man who, while possessed of a strange kink, has not done anything criminal or caused the suffering of living beings: they should make high DC Dark Powers checks as a result. It should go without saying but for absolute clarity, Eva Fitzroy is not comfortable with this plan of action, and will alert the police if she is able.

Attempting to 'bring Fitzroy to justice' is a viable option. Dr Selcon can certainly help them with this. He can have Dr Fitzroy's dissection licence revoked (making covers for pornographic books is certainly not the use cadavers are intended to be put to), assure that the story is covered by reputable newspapers, and absolutely ruin Fitzroy's reputation.

Characters can destroy the books. Interring them, and the remains of the women they came from, respectfully in a marked grave will allow the characters to do so without incurring the wrath of the ghosts. Burning (as Eva suggests) or otherwise destroying them will lead to an encounter with the ghosts. See the Appendix for their stat blocks).

Finally, the characters may choose to intervene no further, deciding that Fitzroy's situation is a just consequence for his actions. In this case, characters will read some weeks later about his death by apparent suicide. They will also make (relatively low DC) Dark Powers checks: however valid their grievances, ghosts are still monsters and tools of the Dark Powers, and letting a man die by inaction is still an evil act.

### Confronting Fitzroy

Fitzroy sees nothing wrong or immoral about his library. He simply made use of some particularly beautiful objects. He does not regard "stop making books out of women" as a useful or practical piece of advice. He insists that the characters figure out how to exorcise the library. If they no longer wish to be involved, he will terminate their arrangement and keep the remainder of the promised fee.

### Fighting the Library

Sally, Rosie, and Lucie are **ghosts**. The DM may choose to have the other three women in Fitzroy's collection manifest as **poltergeists**. The ghosts are extremely dangerous to low level player characters, and fighting all three of them is likely to end in character deaths.

This is intentional: there are numerous ways to resolve Dr Fitzroy's haunting without combat and a head-on fight is rarely the best strategy to face evil.

If combat breaks out, the ghosts are not particularly tactical. They either face off against the closest target to them, or a character who has caused them personal offence. They do not generally pursue characters who leave their immediate area. Make full use of the ghosts' wide range of highly disruptive powers, but make it relatively easy for characters to retreat if they choose to: death is a possibility, not your goal.



# Appendix A: NPCs & Items

## Dr Henry Fitzroy

*medium human, lawful neutral*

**Armor Class** 11

**Hit Points** 32 (5d8 +10)

**Speed** 30 ft.

| Str        | Dex        | Con        | Int        | Wis        | Cha        |
|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 12<br>(+1) | 13<br>(+1) | 14<br>(+2) | 17<br>(+3) | 18<br>(+4) | 10<br>(+0) |

**Saving throws** Intelligence +3, Wisdom +6

**Skills** Arcana +5 Medicine +6 Tools (Healer's Kit) +6

**Senses** passive Perception 14

**Languages** Ancient Greek, English, French, Latin

**Spellcasting.** Dr Fitzroy casts spells as a 5th level Wizard. His spellcasting ability is Intelligence (spell save DC 14, +6 to hit with spell

attacks). He has the following spells prepared:

- **Cantrips (at will):** *blade ward, light, mending, prestidigitation,*
- **1st level (4 slots):** *absorb elements, comprehend languages, shield, sleep*
- **2nd level (3 slots):** *arcane lock, crown of madness, suggestion*
- **3rd level (2 slots):** *counterspell, slow*

### Actions

**Pistol.** *Ranged Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 80/320 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6+1) piercing damage.

**Sword-cane.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d8+1) piercing damage.

## Fitzroy's Spellbook

Fitzroy's spellbook is bound in Lucie Poulter's flawless skin. The pages within can be removed and rebound, or kept as loose leaves after the 'cover' is destroyed.

It contains the following spells:

### 1st Level

*Absorb elements, comprehend languages, shield, sleep*

### 2nd Level

*Arcane lock, crown of madness, suggestion*

### 3rd Level

*Counterspell, slow*



# Appendix B: Amended Spell List

## Cantrips to 3rd Level

|          | Bard                                                                                                                                                                                         | Cleric                                                                                         | Druid                                                                                                                                                                             | Paladin | Ranger | Sorcerer                                                                                                                                                                                    | Warlock                                                                                                                                   | Wizard                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|--------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Cantrips | Blade<br>Ward,<br>Dancing<br>Lights,<br>Friends,<br>Light,<br>Mage<br>Hand,<br>Mending,<br>Message,<br>Minor<br>Illusion,<br>Prestidig-<br>itation,<br>True<br>Strike,<br>Vicious<br>Mockery | Guidance,<br>Light,<br>Mending,<br>Resist-<br>ance,<br>Spare the<br>Dying,<br>Thauma-<br>turgy | Control<br>Flames,<br>Druid-<br>craft,<br>Guidance,<br>Gust, In-<br>festation,<br>Magic<br>Stone,<br>Mending,<br>Mold<br>Earth, Re-<br>sistance,<br>Shape<br>Water,<br>Shillelagh |         |        | Blade<br>Ward<br>Control<br>Flames<br>Dancing<br>Lights<br>Friends<br>Gust<br>Light<br>Mending<br>Message<br>Minor<br>Illusion<br>Prestidigi-<br>tation<br>Shape<br>Water<br>True<br>Strike | Blade<br>Ward<br>Friends<br>Infestation<br>Mage<br>Hand<br>Magic<br>Stone<br>Minor<br>Illusion<br>Prestidigi-<br>tation<br>True<br>Strike | Blade<br>Ward<br>Control<br>Flames<br>Dancing<br>Lights<br>Friends<br>Gust<br>Light<br>Mending<br>Message<br>Minor<br>Illusion<br>Prestidigi-<br>tation<br>Shape<br>Water<br>True<br>Strike |



|           | Bard                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Cleric                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Druid                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Paladin                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Ranger                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Sorcerer                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Warlock                                                                                                                                   | Wizard                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1st level | Animal Friendship, Bane, Charm Person, Comprehend Languages, Cure Wounds, Detect Magic, Disguise Self, Dissonant Whispers, Feather Fall, Healing word, Heroism, Identify, Longstrider, Illusory Script, Longstrider, Silent Image, Sleep, Speak With Animals, Hideous Laughter, Unseen Servant | Bane, Bless, Ceremony, Command, Cure Wounds, Detect Evil & Good, Detect Magic, Detect Poison and Disease, Healing Word, Protection from Evil and Good, Purify Food & Drink, Sanctuary, Shield of Faith | Absorb Elements, Animal Friendship, Beast Bond, Charm Person, Cure Wounds, Detect Magic, Detect Poison and Disease, Earth Tremor, Entangle, Fog Cloud, Healing Word, Jump, Longstrider, Purify Food and Drink, Snare, Speak with Animals | Bless, Ceremony, Command, Compelled Duel, Cure Wounds, Detect Evil and Good, Detect Magic, Detect Poison and Disease, Divine Favor, Heroism, Protection from Evil and Good, Purify Food and Drink, Searing Smite, Shield of Faith, Thunderous Smite, Wrathful Smite | Absorb Elements, Alarm, Animal Friendship, Beast Bond, Cure Wounds, Detect Magic, Detect Poison and Disease, Ensnaring Strike, Hunter's Mark, Jump, Longstrider, Snare, Speak with Animals, Zephyr Strike | Absorb Elements, Catapult, Cause Fear, Charm Person, Comprehend Languages, Expeditious, Retreat, Hex, Illusory Script, Protection from Evil and Good, Unseen Servant, False Life, Feather Fall, Jump, Longstrider, Mage Armour, Protection from Evil & Good, Silent Image, Sleep | Cause Fear, Charm Person, Comprehend Languages, Expeditious, Retreat, Hex, Illusory Script, Protection from Evil and Good, Unseen Servant | Absorb Elements, Alarm, Catapult, Cause Fear, Charm Person, Comprehend Languages, Expeditious, Retreat, Hex, Illusory Script, Protection from Evil and Good, Unseen Servant, False Life, Feather Fall, Find Familiar, Identify, Illusory Script, Jump, Longstrider, Mage Armour, Protection from Evil & Good, Silent Image, Sleep, Snare, Tasha's Hideous Laughter |

|           | Bard                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Cleric                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Druid                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Paladin                                                                                                     | Ranger                                                                                                                                                                               | Sorcerer                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Warlock                                                                                                                                   | Wizard                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2nd level | Animal Messenger, Blindness/Deafness, Calm Emotions, Crown of Madness, Detect Thoughts, Enhance Ability, Enthrall, Hold Person, Invisibility, Knock, Lesser Restoration, Locate Animals or Plants, Locate Object, Magic Mouth, Phantasmal Force, Pyrotechnics, See Invisibility, Silence, Skywrite, Suggestion, Warding Wind, Zone of Truth | Aid, Augury, Blindness, Deafness, Calm Emotions, Enhance Ability, Find traps, Gentle Repose, Hold Person, Lesser Restoration, Locate Object, Prayer of Healing, Protection from Poison, Silence, Warding Bond | Animal Messenger Beast Sense Darkvision Dust Devil Earthbind Enhance Ability Find Traps Gust of Wind Hold Person Lesser Restoration Locate Animals or Plants Locate Object Pass Without Trace Protection from Poison Skywrite Spike Growth Warding Wind | Aid, Branding Smite, Lesser Restoration, Locate Object, Magic Weapon, Protection from Poison, Zone of Truth | Animal Messenger Barkskin Beast Sense Darkvision Find Traps Lesser Restoration Locate Animals or Plants Locate Object Pass Without Trace Protection from Poison Silence Spike Growth | Arcane Lock Blindness/Deafness Blur Crown of Madness Darkvision Detect Thoughts Enhance Ability Hold Person Invisibility Knock Locate Object Magic Weapon Phantasmal Force See Invisibility Spider Climb Suggestion Warding Wind | Crown of Madness Darkness Earthbind Enthrall Hold Person Invisibility Mind Spike Ray of Enfeeblement Shadow Blade Spider Climb Suggestion | Arcane Lock Blindness/Deafness Blur Crown of Madness Darkvision Detect Thoughts Dust Devil Earthbind Hold Person Invisibility Knock Locate Object Magic Mouth Magic Weapon Nystul's Magic Aura Phantasmal Force See Invisibility Spider Climb Suggestion Warding Wind |

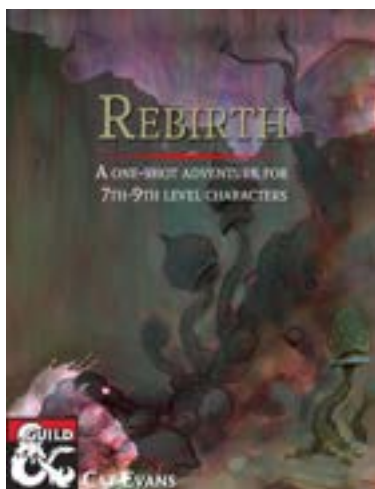


|           | Bard                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Cleric                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Druid                                                                                                                                | Paladin                                                                                   | Ranger                                                                                       | Sorcerer                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Warlock                                                                                                                                  | Wizard                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3rd level | Bestow Curse, Catnap, Clairvoyance, Dispel Magic, Enemies Abound, Fear, Feign Death, Hypnotic Pattern, Major Image, Nondetection, Plant Growth, Sending, Speak with Dead, Speak with Plants, Tongues | Animate Dead, Beacon of Hope, Bestow Curse, Clairvoyance, Create Food and Water, Daylight, Dispel Magic, Feign Death, Life Transference, Magic Circle, Mass Healing Word, Protection from Energy, Revivify, Speak with Dead, Tongues, Water Walk | Call Lightning, Dispel Magic, Feign Death, Plant Growth, Protection from Energy, Speak with Plants, Water Breathing, Walk, Wind Wall | Aura of Vitality, Blinding Smite, Crusader's Mantle, Daylight, Dispel Magic, Magic Circle | Flame Arrows, Plant Growth, Protection from Energy, Speak with Plants, Water Breathing, Walk | Animate Dead*, Bestow Curse*, Clairvoyance, Counter-spell, Dispel Magic, Enemies Abound, Erupting Earth, Fear, Feign Death, Haste, Major Image, Protection from Energy, Sending, Slow, Tongues, Water Breathing | Counter-spell, Dispel Magic, Enemies Abound, Fear, Hunger of Hadar, Hypnotic Pattern, Magic Circle, Major Image, Tongues, Vampiric Touch | Animate Dead*, Bestow Curse*, Catnap, Clairvoyance, Counter-spell, Dispel Magic, Enemies Abound, Erupting Earth, Fear, Feign Death, Haste, Magic Circle, Major Image, Nondetection, Protection from Energy, Sending, Slow, Tiny Servant, Tongues, Water Breathing |



## **Grandmother Crookbesom's Book of Hags**

13 hag NPCs full of plots and personality, including two entirely new types of hags from the minute Thimble Hag to the gargantuan, monstrous Empress Ehesh.



## **Rebirth**

A one-shot adventure for 7th-9th level characters.

Parasitic fungus, undead Celestials... spring is in the air.



## **Blood Sea Rising**

A 1st level adventure for Scarred Lands, full of corruption, pollution, and pirates.

A perfect one-shot to introduce your players to a different, tougher, fantasy world.





# CLIFFHANGER ABBEY

OR, "WE HAVE MADE A TERRIBLE MISTAKE"



A **Ravenloft** ADVENTURE OF RAVENOUS PIETY  
FOR CHARACTERS OF 1ST LEVEL

by **OLIVER CLEGG**

