



horrific parasites

~CREDITS~

WRITING AND DESIGN:

ERIC CAGLE

DEVELOPMENT & EDITING: ROBERT J. SCHWALB

ART DIRECTION: ROBERT J. SCHWALB
AND HAL MANGOLD

PROOFREADING: JAY SPIGHT

GRAPHIC DESIGN: KARA HAMILTON
AND HAL MANGOLD

LAYOUT: KARA HAMILTON

ILLUSTRATIONS: ERIC LOFGREN AND MIRCO PAGANESSI

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SCHWALB ENTERTAINMENT, LLC



PO Box #12548, Murfreesboro, TN 37129

info@schwalbentertainment.com www.schwalbentertainment.com

Monstrous Pages for *Shadow of the Demon Lord*

Lurking in dark alleyways or hiding in plain sight on bustling streets, the enigmatic and damned creatures known as harvesters stalk and murder the innocent to fulfill peculiar needs. Named for their acts of killing and surgically removing organs, bones, and skin from their victims, harvesters have been horrific parasites on civilization for millennia.

Harvester bodies are literal patchworks of organs, limbs, and bones, none of which are their original parts. When an organ begins to fail, a harvester removes the damaged, diseased, or aged one, replacing it with one from a healthy “donor.” This grotesque practice grants them near immortality as they do not appear to age in any traditional sense—some harvesters are hundreds, even a thousand, years old—dying off only when they are caught and killed or when they are unable to replace a critical, failed organ. Because harvesters never venture away from cities and towns, there is always ready supply of fresh organs from the unwitting populace.

This entry in the *Monstrous Pages* series examines the harvesters and lays bare their secrets, revealing their origins, practices, and place in the lands of Rûl. Using the lore and rules in *Horrific Parasites* helps you make harvesters even more dangerous and terrifying!

HARVESTER ORIGINS

Untold centuries ago, a group of nobles, priests, fantastically rich merchants, and other entitled, elite individuals formed a secret society dedicated to expanding their personal wealth and power. While the meetings always had a libertine air to them, with exquisite food, concubines, and illicit substances, they were relatively harmless. This all changed when one of their number, whose name is lost even to the harvesters, brought a curious idol and heretical beliefs with her after an excursion in the wilds of the Northern Reach.

Preaching and cajoling, this messiah of sorts convinced the others to begin worshipping the deity in order to release the rest from civilized morals and ethics—in turn, the deity began to bequeath boons and fortune, making the worshippers richer, more powerful, and more depraved.

The society soon devolved into practicing increasingly debauched, violent, and decadent rites. In time, ritualistic cannibalism became the norm, as was the wearing of victims' skin as clothing and organs as decoration. Their sanity stripped away, the members' doom was set into motion when they petitioned their foul god to destroy and "harvest" the other Old Gods of the land for feast and entertainment. One or more of these Old Gods heard the chants and took umbrage.

The Curse of Flesh: No one knows the exact moment in time, but a terrible curse by these Old Gods descended on them—a curse to live forever as mere meat and gristle, just as they treated their victims before. Their own now-forgotten deity was banished or destroyed, stripping them of their power. In addition, each member of the society (or more properly, cult) discovered that they could no longer feel physical sensations in a meaningful way—no pain, no caress, no awareness of wind on their face—but became acutely aware of their own body's internal processes. Every heartbeat was a noticeable thud in their chest, every morsel of food could be tracked as it dissolved, oozed, and crept through their stomach and intestines, and every breath was a mechanical exercise in mere inflation and deflation. They became acutely aware when their organs begin to fail, which accelerated at an alarming speed after the curse was levied. They also ceased aging in a traditional sense.

Unless otherwise damaged through trauma or disease, the organs of a harvester shrivel and shutdown on their own accord after only a few months. Skin starts to flake and disintegrate anywhere from six to nine months, while bones need to be replaced every one to two years. Paranoid in the extreme, harvesters spend most of their time stalking new victims to gut and add to their collections, ensuring that replacements are always on hand.

A Malign Solution: Cursed to live seemingly forever inside their own failing bodies, the cult fell apart with individuals drifting to various cities. In time, they discovered a "solution" to their dilemma—they could harvest the organs from healthy, living humans and transplant them into their own bodies. Inured to pain, harvesters became adept at carving open their chests, removing diseased or damaged organs, and sewing them into place, all without experiencing shock or death by blood loss (another curious side effect of the curse).

In order for a transplant to be successful, a harvester must use an organ that was pulled from a still-living victim. An organ harvested from a corpse is instantly rejected, causing the harvester something akin to "discomfort" and reduced capacity. Over time, harvesters learned bizarre and loathsome forms of alchemy to preserve their collections—a harvester lair is lined with glass jars full of viscera, teeth, muscle, and skin, floating in brackish ochre or vibrantly green toxic fluid.

Patchworks of Meat: Each harvester has their own unique twist, gaining new abilities after centuries of experimentation, using the organs of non-humans or from victims that were able to harness magic. Although each harvester retains a humanoid form (the better to blend into the crowd), no two are alike, with swatches of different skins stitched together in a web of scars and sutures. A harvester's leg may be longer than the other, giving a harvester a curious limp. Asymmetrical arms ending in hands with differently shaped fingers hang from their mismatched shoulders.

Harvesters are fanatical, almost pathological about hiding their bodies from view. To help with healing and to keep their freshly installed organs in place, harvesters often wrap their bodies in bandages and rags, which weep and leak. They don heavy coats, gloves, and hats, regardless of the weather or temperature to help blend in and keep their knitted forms in place. If questioned, harvesters eloquently lie, often claiming they are survivors of a terrible fire or animal attack, thus requiring the clothing for modesty's sake.

Amalgam of Personalities: When a harvester successfully transplants an organ, it brings along more than just gristle and blood. Trace memories and fragments of personality get pulled along as well. While harvesters always retain their own sense of self and personality, each new organ transfers bits of the donor's quirks, demeanor, tastes, and flaws. Harvesters long learned how to deal with these shifts in their personalities and relish them, reliving hints of memories they themselves never experienced, while forgetting portions of their original history. In many ways, a harvester isn't a single entity, but a compilation of many. Harvesters refer to themselves in

plural terms, using “we” and “us” in conversation and their speech often slips into different accents, genders, and even apparent ages.

This diffusion has an additional side effect: harvesters cannot remember their true origins or memories from the now-distant era beyond a few, vague fragments. They have become creatures of the now, with thoughts dwelling only on the hunt and the desire to remain alive.

Few, but Deadly: Only the harvesters themselves know their total numbers throughout the world, but relatively few remain. Because they are so dependent on having a ready supply of victims, harvesters rarely venture outside the walls of towns or cities. They are smart and cunning enough to know that large numbers in a single location would result in too many mutilated bodies and suspicious investigations. A small town might support one or two harvesters at most, while the largest metropolis can only host anywhere from a dozen to a score.

Harvesters are insanely territorial and carve out specific districts or locations where they are the undisputed masters—no other harvester may collect in another’s territory without explicit permission or, more commonly, through some sort of deal. Frequent violators of the pact are in turn hunted down, their scavenged body parts torn from their bodies and cast away.

Cities of Meat, Abattoirs as Homes: Dependent on humanoids to provide them the body parts necessary for living, harvesters rarely leave the borders of their cities or towns. They are masters at finding secluded, forgotten, or unappealing locations to hole up and practice their craft of experimentation and foul surgery. Harvesters prefer places where the cries of the dying or stench of blood would go unnoticed—beneath butcher stores, sewers, or in forgotten basements of sanatoriums or hospitals. Particularly brave harvesters might set up a secret lair on the very outskirts of a village, preying on stragglers or children that wander too far from their minds.

If a harvester finds it must flee a city (inevitably due to being ousted from its territory by a rival or fleeing an angry mob), it prefers to board crowded ships where the occasional traveler might “accidentally fall overboard” and have his organs harvested in the lowest bowels of the vessel. Once a harvester arrives in its new town or city, it quickly establishes a new lair in the seediest, most dangerous neighborhoods where bodies typically go missing without notice.

Organ Collections: The life of a harvester consists of one thing—finding suitable replacement body parts. As a harvester grows older, even fresh organs collected from a young healthy victim begin to break down in the span of months, thus requiring new organs and continuing the never-ending cycle.

Harvesters measure wealth not in gold, but in the size and variety of organs it has in its stash. Harvester society, as it exists, focuses on small groups meeting in dark, hidden locations, swapping body parts or bartering for new ones. Jars of pickled organs, hands, eyeballs, skin and more are paraded around before the bidding begins—with payment in coin, information, offers of ceding territory or, most commonly, other parts.

Descendants of the Damned: Over the years, the numbers of harvesters dwindled dramatically, but came to a steady plateau. Roughly half the number consists of the original cult from ages ago, but the rest are relatively recent additions. Through trial and error, the harvesters discovered that they could create new harvesters through two, equally horrifying, methods. The first came about when curious, bored, or experimental-minded harvesters would replace their old, failing organs (after removing the healthy ones from the donor) inside the bodies of their victims. In exceedingly rare circumstances, the victim would not only live, but would slowly transform into a harvester themselves over a period of agonizing, pain-wracked weeks. In most cases, the host harvester, consumed by curiosity, raises and teaches this new brood in its terrible ways, instructing them on the harvester curse and the best ways to find victims for collection. Of course, these newly made harvesters are quickly ejected from the city, lest they became rivals.

The second, more horrific, method involves a harvester murdering a pregnant woman and transplanting her swollen, still-living womb inside the harvester’s body to serve as host. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred, the child dies and the harvester must carve out and eject the fetus from its body. Against all odds, a handful of these foster pregnancies “take hold” resulting in a child that appears seemingly healthy and normal until the age of puberty, at which point the harvester curse will set in and the cycle of murder and transplantation begins again. Children “raised” in this manner possess an instinctive bonding towards their progenitor and other harvesters, making them exceedingly loyal servants. Since gender is a meaningless concept to harvesters, any one of them may attempt this process and almost every individual attempts it during their long, cursed, immortal life.

Harvesting a Messiah: While few harvesters have anything resembling a faith since their own foul god was cast by vengeful ones long ago, there are a few that hold a relatively new, twisted ideology. These harvesters believe that by collecting and transplanting organs and flesh from among the living, they may in time become a “perfect being” that can overturn the curse and make them a living, breathing, normal human once again. However, none of these disciples agree on what is the correct collection to create this

messiah. Some believe only the organs of priests will work, while others see the internals of unsullied, sin-free children as their path. A tiny majority thinks the solution lies outside the meat and gristle of man, hunting down elves, dwarfs, and stranger creatures to reap their bounty and create something new and different. So far, these experiments have created unusual, and in some cases, fantastical effects, but none can claim that this perfect being has appeared... yet.

CUSTOMIZING HARVESTERS

Each harvester is a unique combination of guts, sinew, and bone, and thus they come in a wide variety of forms. Particularly adventurous harvesters experiment with non-human body parts, occasionally granting special powers, even with the risk of shortened lifespans.

REDUNDANT ORGANS

Some harvesters learn how to add additional, redundant organs inside their body. This grants them an unholy robustness and fortitude, making them faster, stronger and much harder to kill through trauma. However, the increased demand to keep blood flowing through these extra organs takes a toll on the harvester's mental acuity and focus.

INCREASE BY 1 DIFFICULTY STEP

Health +20
Strength +1, **Intellect** -1, **Will** -1
Speed +1

INFUSED

Harvesters that repeatedly replace their organs with victims that were able to use magic find they can manifest some of this latent magical energy themselves. Regardless of the original source of the magic from these organs, however, the infused harvester's magic only affects itself and a single tradition—Alteration. In addition, this unnaturally obtained magic saps the harvester's physical strength and coordination as it struggles with this arcane power.

INCREASE BY 1 DIFFICULTY STEP

Defense -1
Strength -1, **Agility** -1

MAGIC

Power 1
Alteration *comprehension* (2), *distort appearance* (2),
enhance senses (1), *spider climb* (1)

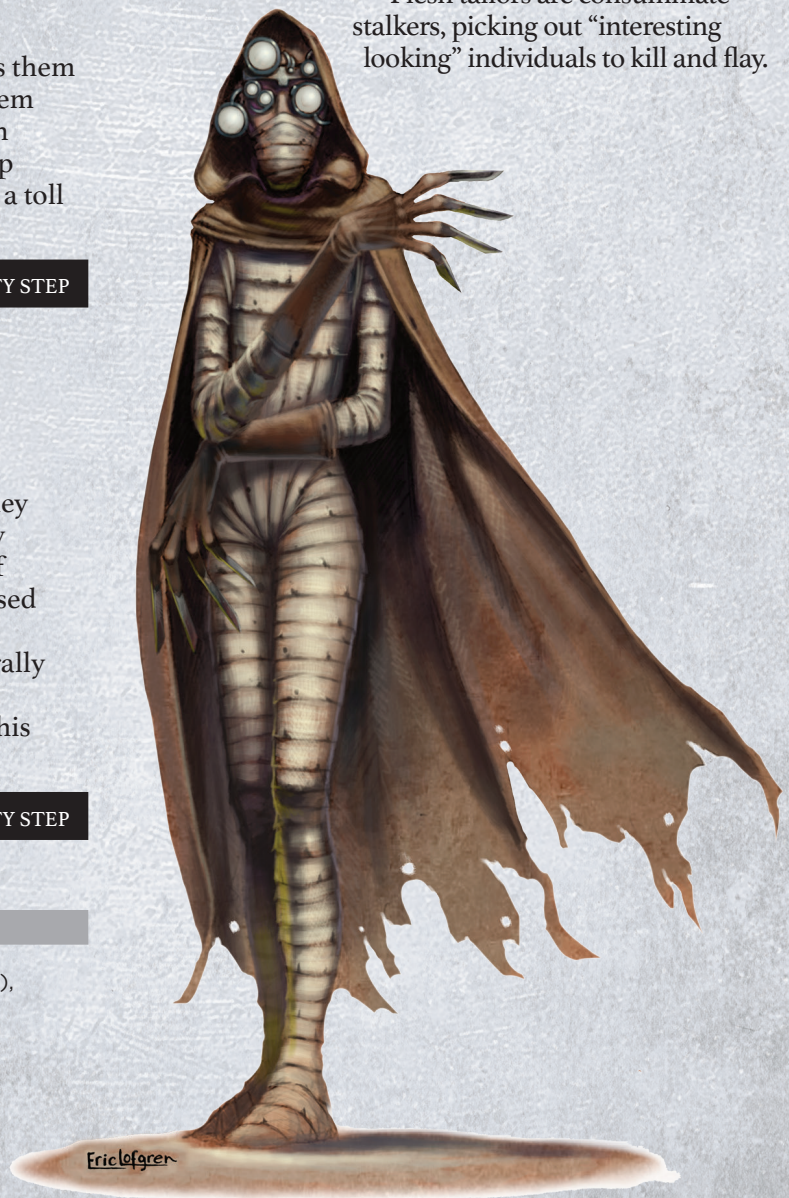
SAMPLE HARVESTERS

Considering that their very forms are comprised of the organs of dozens or hundreds of victims, harvesters come a bewildering array of variations. These variations are less about sub-species as they are the predilections, willingness to experiment, and availability of flesh and organs to rely on. Harvesters consider themselves “experts” and connoisseurs of anatomy, making each one truly unique.

FLESH TAILOR

The cities and towns of Urth swarm with a variety of flesh. Different cultures, factions, and races intermingle, each one defined by their outward appearance—their skin. Certain harvesters become obsessed with collecting the flesh of their victims, much in the way a vain noble dotes and frets over increasing their varied wardrobe of fine clothing.

Flesh tailors are consummate stalkers, picking out “interesting looking” individuals to kill and flay.



They stitch together the “best” features of these victims to create suits of patchwork skin, wearing them with abominable pride. A flesh tailor may kill a young, attractive human female simply to harvest her nose or murder a goblin to slice off a particularly unique ear to add to its ever-evolving suit of flesh.

Unlike most harvesters, flesh tailors shun weapons and use their scalpel-like talons to flay their victims. With a simple swipe, the skin peels from targets in horrific ways to be collected when the deed is done—survivors of a flesh tailor’s attacks come away defiled and mutilated.

Flesh tailors hide their forms beneath heavy clothing, but never their face, which they change from month to month, depending on the harvester’s mood. Indeed, flesh tailors commonly carry a spare face or two (preserved in bottles of foul chemicals) at all times, swapping them out in minutes to change their appearance and slink away when suspicion is high.

Flesh tailors speak High Archaic.

FLESH TAILOR

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 1 horrifying harvester

Perception 13 (+3); shadowsight

Defense 15; **Health** 50

Strength 13 (+3), **Agility** 15 (+5), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 13 (+3)

Speed 12

Immune gaining Insanity

ATTACK OPTIONS

Talons (melee) +5 with 2 boons (2d6 plus Flay on attack roll 20+)

Flay A living creature of flesh and blood takes 1d6 extra damage and becomes impaired for 1 round. If the target is already impaired, it instead takes 1d6 extra damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Change Face When a living creature of flesh and blood becomes incapacitated from an attack made by the flesh tailor, the harvester can use a triggered action to steal its face. The triggering creature dies and each creature that is not a harvester that can see the flesh tailor must get a success on a Will challenge roll or gain 1 Insanity.

Skittering Dance The flesh tailor uses an action or a triggered action on its turn to move up to its Speed. This movement does not trigger free attacks.

HUMOUR DRINKER

While all harvesters must collect and surgically implant the organs of the living, a few find particular pleasure in the intoxicating taste of blood, bile, phlegm and other fluids that slosh around inside the human body. Over time, as they sup on the life-giving fluids of their victims, humour drinkers become addicted and obsessed with the unique flavors and even powers that come from draining a victim dry.

Much like vampires, humour drinkers possess long, piercing fangs used to puncture the skin and drain their victims of their essential fluids—not simply blood. Unlike vampires, harvesters are neither undead nor do their victims feel the ecstatic, incapacitating rapture of this kiss. When a humour drinker’s fangs

sink deep, it sucks in quarts of fluid, immediately exsanguinating and drying out the creature as it flails and moans in horror and utter pain. The humour drinker’s body bloats and distends as it drinks from the vessel, its belly growing while folds of fat rich from bodily fluid, spill out from its clothing.

A humour drinker that hasn’t feasted in the past month resembles an extremely tall, gaunt human, with patchy, bleached skin, sunken eyes, and sharp facial features. As a humour drinker imbibes the fluids of a victim, however, it bloats and grows folds of rosy flesh, a distended belly, and flapping jowls, doubling its girth. After such a feast, a humour drinker becomes vibrant, jovial and almost giddy. This new found “fat,” both physical and emotional, quickly dissipates in the weeks to come, making the harvester increasingly foul tempered and bitter. Since humour drinkers attempt to blend in as they stalk like the rest of their kin, this turn in personality means they must retreat into the shadows to find prey, lest the unwitting prey sense their hunger and raise suspicions, armed with torch and pitchfork.

Humour drinkers speak High Archaic.

HUMOUR DRINKER

DIFFICULTY 100

Size 1 horrifying harvester

Perception 12 (+2); shadowsight

Defense 12; **Health** 75

Strength 18 (+8), **Agility** 12 (+2), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 11 (+3)

Speed 13

Immune gaining Insanity

ATTACK OPTIONS

Hands (melee) +8 with 1 boon against Agility (the target is grabbed and the humour drinker can use a triggered action to attack with its fangs)

Fangs (melee) +8 with 1 boon (3d6 plus Exsanguinate)

Exsanguinate A living creature of flesh and blood must get a success on a Strength challenge roll with 2 banes or take 2d6 extra damage and become impaired for 1 minute. If the creature is already impaired, it takes 2d6 extra damage. Each time a creature takes damage in this way, the humour drinker gains a +5 bonus to Health and makes attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 boon for 1 hour. If the bonus reaches +15, the humour drinker’s Size increase by 1 and it deals 1d6 extra damage on all attacks.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Skittering Dance The humour drinker uses an action or a triggered action on its turn to move up to its Speed. This movement does not trigger free attacks.

ORGAN FILCH

Throughout the Empire’s lands, one can hear stories of corpses discovered in alleys and sewers, the bodies dimpled with cavities left from the harvesting of their organs. Some whisper of necromancers or vile cultists, but those who have encountered the harvesters before recognize these tell tale signs as being the acts of the vile organ filches. Like other harvesters, organ filches depend on materials stolen from living victims to extend their lives, but organ filches focus

their efforts on stealing the lungs and hearts, kidneys and stomachs to replace those same organs that seem always on the verge of failing. Thus the organ filches prowl the dark streets, watchful for vagrants and drunks and addicts on whom they spring to get the meat they so desperately need.

Organ filches shroud their bodies in bloodstained tarps, in some halfhearted effort to conceal the awful truth of their forms. Under the covering, they wrap their gaunt bodies tight with linens to help hold their slippery guts inside their thin, failing flesh, and wear elaborate headgear fitted with numerous lenses to sharpen their weak eyes in order to extract organs with the precision their work demands.

ORGAN FILCH

DIFFICULTY 10

Size 1 horrifying harvester

Perception 14 (+4); shadowsight

Defense 12; **Health** 15

Strength 11 (+1), **Agility** 12 (+2), **Intellect** 14 (+4), **Will** 13 (+3)

Speed 12

Immune gaining Insanity

ATTACK OPTIONS

Scalpel (melee) +2 with 2 boons (2d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Extract Organ

The organ filch steals an organ from one incapacitated or defenseless living creature it can reach. The target creature dies and the filch gains a +2d6 bonus to Health that lasts until it completes a rest.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Skittering Dance The filch uses an action, or a triggered action on its turn, to move up to its Speed. This movement does not trigger free attacks.

TEAR THIEF

The greatest threat harvesters face is the deterioration of their bodies, a fate accompanied by a growing numbness that spreads throughout their physical forms. To combat this tendency, harvesters created a special concoction made from the tears of the living that can awaken, if for a brief time, new feeling in their wrecked flesh. A steady supply of tears is required to make the elixir and so it falls to the tear thieves to spread pain and suffering in the hopes of plucking the sweet, sweet drops from their victims' eyes.

Tear thieves cover their bodies in dark suits or dresses, usually in an old-fashioned style. All cover their eyes with dark lenses to conceal the glint of madness seen in their glassy depths, and they use long thin knives to prick the flesh or eyes in the hopes of coercing the prized fluids to flow.

TEAR THIEF

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 1 horrifying harvester

Perception 14 (+4); darksight

Defense 17; **Health** 50

Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 17 (+7), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 12 (+2)

Speed 12

Immune gaining Insanity; blinded

Hide in Shadows The tear thief can attempt to hide when it is at least partially obscured by shadows, even if it is being observed.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Long Knife (melee) +7 with 2 boons (3d6 plus Extract Tears)

Extract Tears A living creature must get a success on a Will challenge roll with 1 bane or gain 1 Insanity and the tear thief heals 1d6 damage. If the total of the challenge roll is 0 or less, the tear thief also plucks out one of the target's eyes.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Skittering Dance The tear thief uses an action, or a triggered action on its turn, to move up to its Speed. This movement does not trigger free attacks.

