VINTAGE GOTHIC
Teaser of Terror v1.4

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DESIGNED FOR USE WITH

OLD-SCHOOL ESSENTIALS

Introduction

About this Book

Teaser of Terror is a first taste of **Vintage Gothic**: A 3rd-party genre expansion of the **Old-School Essentials** game. Here you will find a short collection of classes and tools to start you on your journey.

In the full product, **Omnibus of Horror,** you will find in addition:

> Two brand new character classes: The entropist (A master of chaos and the dark arts), and the elementalist (A student of primordial power)

> The Gothic psion: A third additional class - a heroic soul with a fractured mind, capable of remarkable psychic feats. This class has been re-imagined for the horror genre with permission from the authors of its source book: **Planar Compass #1**.

> Purchasable equipment: Suited to Georgian and Victorian era campaign settings.

> Two complete new spell lists: For use with the two spell casting classes.

> New psionic powers: As well as some adapted for the new genre from **Planar Compass #1**.

> Corruption mechanics: So that evil may be punished (or rewarded).

> A suite of optional rules: For dealing with such things as starvation, lingering wounds, mystery-solving, and more.

> A menagerie of new monsters: Suited to the horror genre.

> Masterwork items: Game-changing objects of both magic and mad science.

Required Book

The **Old-School Essentials Core Rules** (Hereby referred to as simply **Old-School Essentials**) are required for the use of this product.

Old-School Essentials may be purchased from **necroticgnome.com**. All required rules can also be found for free in the **Old-School Essentials System Reference Document**.

Gothic Horror

"Welcome to my house! Enter freely and of your own will!" He made no motion of stepping to meet me, but stood like a statue, as though his gesture of welcome had fixed him into stone.

-Bram Stoker, Dracula (1897)

A night at the opera is haunted by a masked phantom. A bloodsucker walks oil-lit streets. A cadaver is bestowed life by lightning. The world is none the wiser.

The land features a hidden underbelly of the supernatural and the macabre. In a Gothic Horror campaign, the players are among the few willing to combat the terrors present in the night.

Whether they remain unscathed, uncorrupted, hopeful of a bright morning and with their faith intact: That will be to find out through play. Many will fall to temptation, or to claw of beast - yet some may stand above as beacons of hope in the dark.

Heroics and Adventure

A Gothic world may be one of fear and fright but make no mistake: The player characters are as much hero as they are victim. The referee should include ample opportunity for the PCs to fight back against the horrors and claim victory.

Assumed Setting

This book assumes a campaign setting akin to our 18th or 19th centuries. Progress is afoot with dreams of a technological future while firearms have placed armour on its last legs.

Some may wish for a medieval play experience more akin to that of the world's most popular roleplaying game's own Gothic Horror setting. In that case: combine this work with *Old-School Essentials Classic Fantasy* (And optionally *Old-School Essentials Advanced Fantasy*). A compatibility guide has been included for using these sources alongside *Vintage Gothic*.

The Dread Directives

Referees

> **Trust:** Discuss with your players which horror themes they consider off-limit. Not everyone may be comfortable with body horror, child death, etc.

> **Fairness:** Horror is associated with death. Still: Your players want to play. Their time at your table shouldn't be a constant meat-grinder of new characters.

> **Villainy:** A Gothic tone only works with strong personalities behind its villains. Spend a lot of time developing them and their motivations prior to play.

Players

> **Immerse:** Horror works when those involved are open to experiencing it. Work with your referee to collectively bring the tone your group desires.

> **Invest:** Settings bereft of hope cultivate apathy in their occupants. As the heroes, make sure you are the exception. Devote yourself to whatever change you can bring.

> **Investigate:** Mystery and horror go hand-in-hand. Bring your thinking cap; Don't expect answers on a platter.

Aberrator

> **Requirements:** Minimum INT 9
> **Prime Requisite:** INT
> **Hit Dice:** 1d6
> **Maximum Level:** 14
> **Armour:** Any aberrant armour, including aberrant helmets and aberrant shields
> **Weapons:** Trigger-operated missile weapons, one-handed melee weapons, any aberrant weapon.
> **Languages:** Alignment, Common

The aberrator controls creatures in death through the art of spirit alchemy.

Combat

Aberrators prefer aberrant weapons, which may be forged into any form - including those otherwise considered unusable by the class.

Spirit Level

A creature's spirit level represents how difficult it is for an aberrator to control.

Calculating spirit level: HD + # HD asterisks + Highest accessible spell level

Spirit Binding

Aberrators may attempt to capture a piece of a dying creature's spirit. This can be attempted at the end of each combat round automatically.

Spirit binding follows these conditions:

> The creature's spirit level is no higher than the aberrator's level.

> The creature is within line-of-sight upon it reaching zero hit points.

> The aberrator has a free visual medium (Canvas, mirror, etc.) worth at least 50gp per spirit level of the creature.

Binding chance: Base 10% chance of successfully binding the creature, plus 5% for each level of difference between the creature and aberrator.

Any creature may be spirit bound: Including the undead and constructs.

Maximum spirit count: Noted in the aberrator progression table. This applies only to the number currently bound.

Beginning spirit: Any creature with up to one spirit level that the referee allows.

Aberrant Equipment

Aberrators may use bound spirits to create magical aberrant equipment.

Summonable: Aberrant equipment may be summoned or dispelled in the spellcasting phase of combat

Character locked: May only be used by the aberrator who forged it.

Aberrant Crafting

This equipment can take any form the aberrator wishes at the time of crafting (Which takes one week)

> **Counts toward spirits bound:** However the storage medium is freed.

> **Powerful spirits:** Used to forge better equipment. See the table across for modifiers associated with spirit level.

> **Equipment cost:** No more in gp than ten times the spirit level being used. Modifiers from high spirit levels do not increase the item's gold value.

> **Once forged:** A spirit stays in that form until released into death.

Aberrator Level Progression

| Level | XP | HD | THAC0 | Saving Throws | | | | | Spirits |
				D	W	P	B	S	
1	0	1d6	19 [0]	12	13	13	15	15	3
2	3,000	2d6	19 [0]	12	13	13	15	15	4
3	6,000	3d6	19 [0]	12	13	13	15	15	5
4	15,000	4d6	17 [+2]	10	11	11	13	12	6
5	30,000	5d6	17 [+2]	10	11	11	13	12	7
6	60,000	6d6	17 [+2]	10	11	11	13	12	8
7	120,000	7d6	14 [+5]	8	9	9	10	10	9
8	250,000	8d6	14 [+5]	8	9	9	10	10	10
9	400,000	9d6	14 [+5]	8	9	9	10	10	11
10	550,000	9d6+1*	12 [+7]	6	7	8	8	8	12
11	660,000	9d6+2*	12 [+7]	6	7	8	8	8	13
12	770,000	9d6+3*	12 [+7]	6	7	8	8	8	14
13	880,000	9d6+4*	10 [+9]	4	5	6	6	7	15
14	980,000	9d6+5*	10 [+9]	4	5	6	6	7	16

* Modifiers from CON no longer apply.

D: Death / Poison; **W:** Wands;

P: Paralysis / Petrify; **B:** Breath attacks;

S: Spells / rods/ staves.

Aberrant Control

Husks of bound spirits can be summoned to the aberrator's presence or dispelled.

Summoning: One creature per round, summoned on the spellcasting phase.

Maximum husks: May have up to four spirit levels - or a single creature of higher level - in play at once.

Statistics: Shared with those of their source creatures. The husk is loyal to the aberrator and obeys their commands.

If a husk dies: Must succeed on a **saving throw versus death** or be released into death. Otherwise it may be summoned again after one day per spirit level.

Release Into Death

A bound spirit may be permanently released with a ten-minute ritual, freeing that spirit slot and the medium used.

The released spirit leaves the material plane and may not be called upon again.

Aberrant Equipment Bonuses

Spirit Level	Bonus
4th	+1
8th	+2
12th	+3

After Reaching 9th Level

Spirits may now be released into death violently in a single round like a spell.

The spirit is released in a 20' long cone (20' wide at the end). It requires a **saving throw versus spells** indicating half damage. The damage dealt is a number of d6s equal to the level of spirit released.

Thy soul shall find itself alone
'Mid dark thoughts of the gray tombstone-
Not one, of all the crowd, to pry
Into thine hour of secrecy.
    -Edger Allen Poe, Spirits of the Dead
(1827)

Avenger

> **Requirements:** None
> **Prime Requisite:** STR
> **Hit Dice:** 1d8
> **Maximum Level:** 14
> **Armour:** Any, Including helmets and shields
> **Weapons:** Any
> **Languages:** Alignment, Common

Avengers are the warriors of Gothic literature. They are Jonathan Harker and his allies hounding Count Dracula through Europe. They are Victor Frankenstein trailing through the dead of winter after his murderous creation.

Combat

Avengers may use all types of weapons and armour.

Nemeses

An avenger's defining trait is their nemesis: A single creature or a whole cabal that the avenger wishes dead.

Nature of a nemesis: May be either a specific individual or only vaguely defined (e.g. "The criminals who burned down my home"). Any nemesis must have significantly wronged the avenger.

Multiple nemeses: Must all be directly related in how they harmed the avenger.

When to choose a nemesis: A nemesis may be created with the referee before play, or chosen during play from any NPCs satisfying the requirements.

Nemesis deaths: If an avenger's final nemesis should die, the avenger may choose another at any time.

Avenger Bonuses

The bonuses from the Avenger Combat Bonuses table are received while in an encounter which includes either:

> One or more nemeses.

> Any number of the nemeses' minions.

Line of sight: These bonuses apply even if not in direct combat with applicable creatures. They must merely remain within line of sight.

Bonuses don't stack: Only the highest applicable bonus is taken.

Nemesis bonuses: The avenger's nemesis receives bonuses of equal value.

After Reaching 9th Level

Due to an avenger's passion in their crusade, they can convince almost anyone to offer them aid.

Host's offerings: Any shelter and equipment they can spare, as well as transport of up to fifty miles to the avenger and allies.

Social tier of person asked: No more than one tier higher than the avenger (E.g. A beggar may ask of a commoner, but not a lord).

Hostile: The request only has a 1-in-6 chance of success if the person asked has a negative view of the avenger, and always fails if actively hostile.

Avenger Combat Bonuses

	Versus	
Bonus	**Nemesis***	**Minions**
Attack	+2	+1
Damage	+4	+1
HP Leeway**	-10 hp	-5 hp

* Nemeses receive bonuses of equal value while facing the avenger.

** An avenger may continue to fight unaffected until they hit this negative hit point threshold. If the bonus ends while they are below one hit point, regular death rules apply.

If I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear; and chiefly towards you my arch-enemy, because my creator, do I swear inextinguishable hatred. Have a care; I will work at your destruction, nor finish until I desolate your heart, so that you shall curse the hour of your birth.

-Mary Shelly, Frankenstein (1818)

Avenger Level Progression

Level	XP	HD	THAC0	Saving Throws				
				D	W	P	B	S
1	0	1d8	19 [0]	12	13	14	15	16
2	2,200	2d8	19 [0]	12	13	14	15	16
3	4,400	3d8	19 [0]	12	13	14	15	16
4	8,800	4d8	17 [+2]	10	11	12	13	14
5	17,000	5d8	17 [+2]	10	11	12	13	14
6	35,000	6d8	17 [+2]	10	11	12	13	14
7	70,000	7d8	14 [+5]	8	9	10	10	12
8	140,000	8d8	14 [+5]	8	9	10	10	12
9	270,000	9d8	14 [+5]	8	9	10	10	12
10	400,000	9d8+2*	12 [+7]	6	7	8	8	10
11	530,000	9d8+4*	12 [+7]	6	7	8	8	10
12	660,000	9d8+6*	12 [+7]	6	7	8	8	10
13	790,000	9d8+8*	10 [+9]	4	5	6	5	8
14	920,000	9d8+10*	10 [+9]	4	5	6	5	8

* Modifiers from CON no longer apply.

D: Death / Poison; **W:** Wands;
P: Paralysis / Petrify; **B:** Breath attacks;
S: Spells / rods/ staves.

Occultist

Requirements: Minimum INT 9
Prime Requisite: INT
Hit Dice: 1d6
Maximum Level: 14
Armour: Any, including helmets and shields
Weapons: Trigger-operated missile weapons, one-handed melee weapons
Languages: Alignment, Common

The occultist is a keeper of forgotten knowledge. They are the Abraham Van Helsings of the world – searching for facts where most would see fiction.

Combat

Occultists can use anything deemed "point and shoot" - such as a crossbow or firearm - as well as one-handed melee weapons.

Ancient Lore

Once per round: One of the following bonuses may be applied via lore recital to all allies versus a single supernatural creature type:

> +1 to attacks.

> +1 to a single saving throw type.

> +1 AC.

Lore recital: Performed during the spellcasting phase and may be interrupted. The occultist does not have to remain stationary while reciting lore.

Duration: 1d6 rounds or until this ability is used again.

Multiple occultists: Identical bonuses do not stack with each other. Unique bonuses may be simultaneously applied.

Turning the Undead

Occultists use knowledge gained from their studies to repel undead monsters. To turn the undead, the player rolls 2d6. The referee then consults the table opposite, comparing the roll against the hit dice of the undead monsters targeted.

Holy symbol: Must be presented toward the undead creature by the occultist for turning to have any effect.

Successful Turning

If the turning attempt succeeds, the player must roll 2d6 to determine the number of HD affected (turned or destroyed).

Turned undead: Will leave the area, if possible, and will not harm or make contact with the occultist.

Destroyed undead (result of D): Are instantly and permanently annihilated.

Excess: Rolled Hit Dice that are not sufficient to affect a creature are wasted. However, at least one undead creature will always be affected on a successful turning.

Mixed groups: If turn undead is used against a mixed group of undead monsters of different types, those with the lowest HD are affected first.

Duration: Undead turned by an occultist are only effected for one turn (ten minutes). Once this duration has passed, they are free to return.

Occultist Level Progression

Level	XP	HD	THAC0	Saving Throws				
				D	W	P	B	S
1	0	1d6	19 [0]	11	12	14	16	15
2	1,300	2d6	19 [0]	11	12	14	16	15
3	2,600	3d6	19 [0]	11	12	14	16	15
4	5,200	4d6	19 [0]	11	12	14	16	15
5	10,000	5d6	17 [+2]	9	10	12	14	12
6	20,000	6d6	17 [+2]	9	10	12	14	12
7	40,000	7d6	17 [+2]	9	10	12	14	12
8	80,000	8d6	17 [+2]	9	10	12	14	12
9	160,000	9d6	14 [+5]	6	7	9	11	9
10	280,000	9d6+1*	14 [+5]	6	7	9	11	9
11	400,000	9d6+2*	14 [+5]	6	7	9	11	9
12	500,000	9d6+3*	14 [+5]	6	7	9	11	9
13	600,000	9d6+4*	12 [+7]	3	5	7	8	7
14	700,000	9d6+5*	12 [+7]	3	5	7	8	7

* Modifiers from CON no longer apply.

D: Death / Poison; **W:** Wands;

P: Paralysis / Petrify; **B:** Breath attacks;

S: Spells / rods/ staves.

Turning Table Results

-: The turning fails.

Number: If the 2d6 turning roll is higher or equal, the turning attempt succeeds.

T: The turning succeeds.

D: The turning succeeds; the monsters are destroyed, not simply caused to flee.

After Reaching 9th Level

Ancient lore: The occultist may now choose two effects to be applied simultaneously. Both effects last for the same amount of time.

As always: Multiple of the same *ancient lore* effect may not be stacked atop each other.

Spell scrolls: The occultist can now cast arcane spells from scrolls. There is a 10% chance of error: the spell does not function as expected and creates an unusual or deleterious effect.

Turning the Undead

Level	Monster Hit Dice†							
	1	2	2*	3	4	5	6	7-9
1	7	9	11	-	-	-	-	-
2	T	7	9	11	-	-	-	-
3	T	T	7	9	11	-	-	-
4	D	T	T	7	9	11	-	-
5	D	D	T	T	7	9	11	-
6	D	D	D	T	T	7	9	11
7	D	D	D	D	T	T	7	9
8	D	D	D	D	D	T	T	11
9	D	D	D	D	D	D	T	T
10	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	T
11+	D	D	D	D	D	D	D	D

* 2 HD monsters with a special ability (i.e. with an asterisk next to their HD rating, in the monster description).

† At the referee's option, the table may be expanded to include more powerful types of undead monsters.

Tradesman

Requirements: None
Prime Requisite: WIS
Hit Dice: 1d4
Maximum Level: 14
Armour: Light armour, helmets, shields
Weapons: Trigger-operated missile weapons, one-handed melee weapons
Languages: Alignment, Common

The tradesman represents common everyday folk. They are incredibly versatile – encompassing all from butchers to doctors and more.

Combat

Tradesmen cannot use anything more than the most basic of armaments. They can manage with anything deemed "point and shoot" - such as a crossbow or firearm - as well as one-handed melee weapons.

Vocations

The tradesman's abilities are the most varied of the Gothic classes. They are able to harness not only the skills of their chosen occupation, but also those which they have only a layman's knack in.

Vocation tiers

Each has three tiers: Vocations become more powerful with each tier, although only the first two vocation tiers are available until reaching 9th-level.

At first level: Three vocations may be picked. One of these vocations begins at tier two (Presumed to be your character's actual occupation.); The other two are tier one.

At each odd-numbered tradesman level: Either distribute two more tiers amongst vocations already known or spend both on learning a new vocation at its first tier.

List of Vocations*

Alienist: Study a single intelligent NPC for a turn to have a 2-in-6 chance per vocation tier of learning their alignment.

Aristocrat: Speak one additional language per vocation tier. Available languages are determined by the referee.

Burglar: While unaccompanied by non-Burglars, chance to surprise opponents increases by 1-in-6 per vocation tier. (See *Surprise* under *Encounters* in *Old-School Essentials*)

Butcher: Against surprised opponents, receive an attack bonus of vocation tier multiplied by 2. Additionally, damage from such an attack is multiplied by the vocation tier. This does not stack with similar features when multiclassed.

Detective: Additional 1d6 per vocation tier to find hidden elements in the environment, such as traps and secret doors.

Doctor: Using first-aid, heal yourself or a target by 1d6-1 hit points. First-aid can only be applied within a number of rounds since the target was harmed equal to the vocation tier. This ability may only be applied once per target per day.

Healing increases to 2d6-2 at the third vocation tier.

Labourer: Gain an additional hit point per vocation tier per tradesman level.

Scholar: Given a turn to do so, you have a 1-in-6 chance per vocation tier to be able to read text in any natural language.

Soldier: Per vocation tier, gain the ability to use one new weapon or armour. Any armour chosen may not be more than one step better than those already available.

Vicar: 2-in-6 chance per vocation tier to attempts to avoid being charmed.

* The referee is encouraged to invent additional vocations of their own.

After Reaching 9th Level

The Tradesman now has access to third-tier Vocations.

Tradesman Level Progression

| Level | XP | HD | THAC0 | Saving Throws | | | | |
				D	W	P	B	S
1	0	1d4	19 [0]	13	14	13	16	15
2	1,200	2d4	19 [0]	13	14	13	16	15
3	2,400	3d4	19 [0]	13	14	13	16	15
4	4,800	4d4	19 [0]	13	14	13	16	15
5	9,600	5d4	17 [+2]	12	13	11	14	13
6	20,000	6d4	17 [+2]	12	13	11	14	13
7	40,000	7d4	17 [+2]	12	13	11	14	13
8	80,000	8d4	17 [+2]	12	13	11	14	13
9	180,000	9d4	14 [+5]	10	11	9	12	10
10	300,000	9d4+1*	14 [+5]	10	11	9	12	10
11	400,000	9d4+2*	14 [+5]	10	11	9	12	10
12	520,000	9d4+3*	14 [+5]	10	11	9	12	10
13	640,000	9d4+4*	12 [+7]	8	9	7	10	8
14	760,000	9d4+5*	12 [+7]	8	9	7	10	8

* Modifiers from CON no longer apply.

D: Death / Poison; **W:** Wands;

P: Paralysis / Petrify; **B:** Breath attacks;

S: Spells / rods/ staves.

Ability Replacements

A fantasy campaign has its heroes aspire to build keeps and raise armies in domain-level play. Such endeavours don't mesh well with the intended tone of a Gothic horror game.

Suggested here are alternatives for the stronghold class features in *Old-School Essentials Classic Fantasy* and *Advanced Fantasy*.

Acrobat

After reaching 9th level: An acrobat may move their full encounter movement rate while performing a fighting withdrawal.

Assassin

After reaching 12th level: Three hours of studying a person's speech, writing, or behaviour allows an assassin to perfectly mimic those aspects of the person.

Barbarian

After reaching 8th level: A barbarian can enter a battle rage - gaining +2 to attacks, damage, AC, and saves. If a round passes without the barbarian attacking a creature, the rage ends.

Upon a rage ending: A full hour's rest is required in order to rage again. Until then the barbarian receives -2 to attack rolls and their movement rate is halved.

Bard

After reaching 11th level: A bard may add two first-level spells to their spell list from any other list the referee allows.

Cleric

After Reaching 9th Level: A cleric can call on their deity's protection once per day. In doing so, metal weapons have a -4 penalty to hit the cleric for 3d6 rounds.

Drow

After reaching 9th level: Drow may add *alter self*, *summon undead*, and *dance macabre* to their spell list (see *Entropist Spells* in *Vintage Gothic*).

Druid

After reaching 12th level: A druid may spend one turn ensuring that corpses will not rise as undead. This process can only be performed once per day but can effect up to ten bodies with a single blessing.

Duergar / Dwarf

After reaching 9th level: Toward others of their own race, gain +3 to reaction roles. The Duergar / Dwarf may also demand shelter and aid - within reason of whatever the NPC can afford to provide.

Elf

After reaching 9th level: An elf gains a +4 bonus to all saving throws versus mind-controlling or sleep-inducing effects.

Fighter

After reaching 9th level: Fear and horror saves are made with a +3 and +1 bonus respectively. Stress allowance increases by 50% (see *Trauma Saves, p14* and *Stress & Sanity, p16*).

Gnome / Svirfneblin

After reaching 8th level: Any spell which still has an effect upon a successful saving throw (e.g. half-damage on a success) instead has no effect on the Gnome / Svirfneblin.

Half-Elf

After reaching 9th level: Fear saves are made with a +1 bonus and stress allowance increases by 20% (see *Trauma Saves, p14* and *Stress & Sanity, p16*). The half-elf also gains a +2 bonus to all saving throws versus mind-controlling or sleep-inducing effects.

Halfling

At all levels: A halfling is an excellent travelling partner. A roll of 2-in-6 will point the halfling down the correct path leading to somewhere they have previously been.

Magic User / Illusionist

After reaching 11th level: A magic user or illusionist understands good and evil like the finest philosopher. Chances of a failed **notice check** are halved

Half-Orc / Thief

After reaching 8th level: In the attempts of both half-orcs and thieves to blend in, they have learned to be always on guard. They are surprised only on a 1-in-6.

Knight

In place of "Stronghold": A knight swears to protect their people. They gain a bonus to reaction rolls with their people based on however wide the area is that they have chosen to protect.

After Reaching 9th Level: Once per round a knight can take any incoming damage that would have been inflicted on an adjacent ally - including in the case of area-of-effect attacks.

Knight's Sworn Protection	
Protection Range	**Reaction Bonus**
Village	+4
City	+3
Region	+2
Nation	+1

Paladin

After reaching 9th level: A paladin is a beacon of hope in the dark. While turning undead, any adjacent undead are launched 10' away from the paladin. This even affects undead creatures that the turning attempt otherwise fails to affect.

Ranger

After reaching 10th level: A ranger can take one month to gather and mix ingredients for a cure to lycanthropy. The cure, once created, only lasts one week before spoiling. After ingesting the cure, a lycanthrope must make a **saving throw versus death**. On a success: They are cured. On a failure: They die.

Class Restrictions

For use with characters of split race and class (See *Character Races* in *Old-School Essentials Advanced Fantasy*).

Aberrator: Drow (9th), Elf (11th), Half-elf (11th), Human (Unlimited)

Artificer: Duergar (9th), Dwarf (9th), Gnome (12th), Half-elf (5th), Half-Orc (8th), Human (Unlimited), Svirfneblin (10th) (See *Vintage Gothic: Artificer Class* on DriveThruRPG.)

Avenger: Drow (7th), Duergar (9th), Dwarf (10th), Elf (7th), Gnome (6th), Half-elf (9th), Halfling (6th), Half-Orc (10th), Human (Unlimited), Svirfneblin (6th)

Occultist: Drow (11th), Duergar (8th), Dwarf (8th), Elf (7th), Gnome (7th), Half-elf (10th), Half-Orc (5th), Human (Unlimited)

Tradesman: Drow (11th), Duergar (9th), Dwarf (9th), Elf (10th), Gnome (8th), Half-elf (12th), Halfling (8th), Half-Orc (8th), Human (Unlimited), Svirfneblin (8th)

Tools of Terror

Terror in Play

In times of extreme stress: We fight, or we run, or we stop and stare slack-jawed. We can't say which it will be until the moment it happens.

While a threat to a PC's life is motivation to respond realistically to danger, this chapter provides additional mechanics to help portray a character's reaction to traumatic situations.

Approaches to Terror

This chapter presents two sets of terror mechanics. The first are the *trauma saves* and the second is *stress & sanity*.

Asynchronous: While it is recommended that groups try out both options, they aren't designed for simultaneous use.

Mental Recovery: Regardless of the chosen approach, see *Mental Recovery, p18* for details on coming back from the brink of madness.

A note on mental health

It must be mentioned that this book's portrayal of mental health is not true to life - nor is it intended to be.

Use of these rules is meant to emulate the melodramatic interpretations of "madness" from 19th-century fiction. The science of the era had just touched the surface of mental health, thus public view of it was unnuanced.

If such a portrayal makes you or any of your players uncomfortable, you are more than welcome to drop this chapter entirely.

Trauma Saves

This is the simpler of the two approaches. It is based around three new saves:

> **Fear Save:** For panic and danger.

> **Horror Save:** For cases of intense revulsion and mental anguish.

> **Madness Save:** For terrors so indescribable that the mind can't cope.

Making trauma saves: All three are made as **saves versus paralysis,** adding the character's WIS modifier.

Fear Saving Throw

Fear prompts: When faced with threats of overwhelming force.

Some rules of thumb for what constitutes an overwhelming force:

> **Number of hit dice:** Double that of on the party side.

> **No means of harm:** E.g. Fighting a werewolf with no silver at hand.

> **Vicious:** A single opponent could easily kill a party member in one round.

Consequences of Fear

While in the presence of the fear source, a character faces the following effects:

> **In melee with fear source:** Movement must be in the form of a retreat (See *Movement* under *Combat* in *Old-School Essentials*).

> **Attacks:** Made at -2.

> **Movement toward fear source:** Not willingly possible.

Duration: Until the encounter's end.

Horror Saving Throw

Horror Prompts

When deciding whether to call for a horror saving throw, the referee should consider the scenario from the characters' points of view.

For example: The party is confronted for the first time with a corpse slowly turning toward them - its maw overflowing with viscera.

The above may be a bog-standard zombie encounter for the players. For novice adventurers who have seen nothing like that before: It is utterly horrifying.

Repeat exposure to similar stimuli (Optional): A repeat of any horrifying stimuli the PC has already succeeded in saving against should cease to affect them after a session of play.

Consequences of Horror

Effect: Roll 1d6 on the table below, determining which effect the character experiences.

Horror duration: Lasts for one month unless otherwise specified in the effect entry.

Lingering Horror

The effects of a failed horror saving throw might resurge with similar stimuli.

Similar source of horror: If encountered within a month of the original failed save, the horror provokes a saving throw again at -2. They relapse into the same horror effect as previously if they fail.

Madness Saving Throw

Madness prompts: Consider the following:

> Direct contact: With the minds of undead, the insane, or the otherworldly.

> Breaking Point: Undergo a permanent and horrible physical transformation; Be the last survivor of the party, etc.

On a failed save: Gain an indefinite insanity from *Stress & Sanity, p16*.

Rare: Madness saves should be used sparingly as the consequences are high.

> What would your feelings be, seriously, if your cat or your dog began to talk to you, and to dispute with you in human accents? You would be overwhelmed with horror. I am sure of it. And if the roses in your garden sang a weird song, you would go mad.
>
> -Arthur Machen, The White People

Horror Consequences	
Roll	Effect
1	**Faint:** The character immediately drops unconscious for 1d3 rounds.
2	**Inaction:** The character is paralysed for a minimum of three rounds. The save can be retried each subsequent round.
3	**Nightmares:** The character is plagued with dreadful nightmares. Each week the character must make a save versus paralysis or receive a cumulative -1 penalty to attacks and saving throws from restless nights. A successful save alleviates the penalty by one step.
4	**Obsession:** The character finds themselves obsessed with the object of their horror. Obsessed characters invoke a -2 penalty to reaction roles. They also only regain one hit point of natural healing per day of rest as they spend every waking moment with their mind on their obsession.
5	**Rage:** Character gains an overwhelming desire to destroy the source of horror, as well as +4 to attack and damage rolls while it is in sight.
6	**Revulsion:** Same effect as a failed fear save. Additionally: The character cannot bare to be reminded of the source of revulsion for the next month.

Stress & Sanity

Of the two approaches to terror included in this book, this is the more complex. It should be used by referees who want the PCs' psyches to experience a smooth decline.

Stress

A character's stress begins at 0 and works upward in response to taxing situations and horrifying experiences.

Stress allowance: 25 + (3 x level) + wisdom modifier + intelligence modifier.

Snapping points: When a character hits certain stress milestones they develop an insanity from the tables on the right.

Milestones are as follow:

> 30%: Short-term insanity (1d6 turns).

> 60%: Long-term insanity (2d4 weeks).

> 90%: Indefinite insanity (Until cured).

> 100%: Permanent insanity.

Fractional milestones: Round milestones up to the nearest whole number.

Gaining Stress

Everything from a fright to a world-shattering revelation can cause a character to accrue stress.

A character gains varying amounts of stress based on how unsettling the event is - as shown in the table below.

Stress Gain

Amount	Example Causes
+1	Surprised to find a corpse; Lights go out; Fail a task.
+1d4	Outnumbered 2:1; Unable to harm a foe; Make a critical mistake.
+1d6	See a new monster for the first time; Witness a friend's death.
+2d6	Trapped alone in a horrifying situation; Undergo torture.

Repeat exposure to similar stimuli: The various scenarios are treated as follow:

> Horrific and supernatural sights: Lose their effect after around a session of gameplay. A character's first sight of a zombie is more horrifying than their fifth.

> Surprises and imminent danger: Never cease being stressful.

Stress saves: Cases involving threats a character has experienced previously but hasn't necessarily become numb to may provoke a **saving throw versus paralysis with WIS modifier** to determine whether any stress is gained.

Stress-Free Zones

Anywhere a character considers especially safe (e.g. their home, or a friendly inn) is a stress-free zone.

No gain: So long as the area remains free of potential danger, the character will not gain any additional stress.

Relaxing: A character loses as much stress as they regain hit points from natural healing while resting within a stress-free zone.

Roleplaying Insanity

Players should be given a large amount of freedom in how they choose to portray their ailment. If multiple interpretations of an effect are listed, the player is entitled to choose.

Permanent Insanity

A character who has reached 100% stress has a complete mental break. They have been driven mad and have entered permanent catatonia.

Out of play: The character is now considered an NPC under referee control.

Permanent care: The character must be given permanent care or die.

Harm to the character: Results in the character succumbing to a heart attack.

Short-Term Insanity (1d6 turns)

Roll	Effect
1	**Aphasia:** Unable to speak beyond incomprehensible stutters.
2	**Echolalia:** Repeat back what those around the character say.
3	**Flashback:** Vividly relive a prior event. A slap will knock a character out of this.
4	**Flee:** Intense need to get somewhere safe (Home, daylight, hiding place, etc.).
5	**Homicidal:** Intense urge to destroy that which offends them.
6	**Hysterics:** laughing, screaming, or crying - alerting threats within the area.
7	**Mild catatonia:** Unable to act unless forced to by somebody else.
8	**Stupor:** Assume the fetal position and become oblivious to all outside events.

Long-Term Insanity (2d4 weeks)

Roll	Effect
1	**Addiction:** Susceptible to addictive substances and activities.
2	**Memory repression:** Events related to source of insanity are repressed.
3	**Confusion:** Make an **INT check** to focus on conversations and mental activities.
4	**Diabolical voices:** The character hears voices which say nothing positive.
5	**Hysterical blindness:** Instantly struck blind.
6	**Nightmares:** -1 penalty to attack rolls and saving throws per night (Max: -6).
7	**Obsession:** Force source of snap into conversation. -2 penalty to reaction roles.
8	**Paranoia:** Intense paranoia which extends even to close allies.

Indefinite Insanity (Until cured)

Roll	Effect
1	**Amnesia:** The character loses all memory of their identity and their life.
2	**Delusions:** Character believes they are someone or something they are not.
3	**Eating disorder:** Character is unable to eat or unable to stop eating.
4	**Hallucinations:** Frequent seen and revolve around the source of insanity.
5	**Moral snap:** The character's alignment reverses (Or if neutral: Shifts).
6	**Paranoia:** As the long-term insanity, except with an indefinite duration.
7	**Religious mania:** Compulsively pray and become fanatic about a chosen faith.
8	**Severe phobia:** Intense and debilitating fear of whatever caused the snap.

Mental Recovery

Treatment

PCs looking for mental health treatment can seek out either a private carer or a sanitarium.

Treatment order: Mental ailments are always treated one at a time and in order of increasing severity.

Cost: The costs presented in the table below are the minimal rates which must be paid even if the full month isn't used.

Private Care

The PC in private care has hired a trained individual to personally see to their healing process. Care is performed somewhere the PC feels safe - such as their own home.

Horror and long-term insanity: If half of the ailment's duration is spent receiving care, the character ends their condition early.

Madness and indefinite insanity: The PC has a 2-in-6 chance to end their condition for each month spent in care.

Alienist PCs: A tradesman with the alienist vocation may take the carer position for another PC, with the following caveats:

> The alienist may not currently be subject to any horror or insanity effects.

> The alienist can only care for one character at a time this way.

Sanitarium

Institutionalisation is a relatively cheap method of acquiring mental aid. The trade-off is a lower quality of care - often even neglectful or cruel.

Stressful environment: Stress does not decrease while within a sanitarium.

Horror and long-term insanity: If half the ailment's duration is spent receiving care, the character ends their condition early.

Madness and indefinite insanity: The PC has a 2-in-6 chance to end their condition for each month spent in care.

Each time the above roll is failed, the PC faces one of the following consequences:

> **Trauma saves:** PC must make a **madness save** with a +4 bonus.

> **Stress & sanity:** PC gains 5 points of stress.

Sanitarium adventure: It is up to the referee whether the next sanitarium is a downtime rest stop, or the sight of the campaign's next adventure. It is recommended, however, that the latter be done sparingly so as to not sow mistrust.

Permanent Insanity

Any character who has been driven to permanent insanity has lost any ability to care for themselves.

The character may be moved to a sanitarium to live out the rest of their days.

Cost: 5gp per month. The character requires only basic care; All attempts at treatment have been abandoned.

Professional Care Costs (GP per Month)				
	Sanitarium		Private Care	
PC Level	Long-Term / Horror	Indefinite / Madness	Long-Term / Horror	Indefinite / Madness
1-3	50	70	100	140
4-7	80	90	160	180
8-11	90	110	180	220
12-14	100	130	200	260

Gothic Guidelines

The following explores the very basics of horror play for referees new to the genre.

Tension vs Terror

There are two sorts of emotion that a referee should be looking to evoke:

> **Tension:** The buildup. Description raises suspense; heightens dread.

> **Terror:** The release. The bubble of foreboding has popped, becoming pure panic in the face of danger or tragedy.

Importance of both: To build tension without payoff is disappointing. Evoking terror from nothing feels unearned. By moving through both in a cycle, you have the basic building blocks of horror.

Evoking Tension

The heart of horror is in description. With each detail you build player immersion.

Value of imagination: Players become more open to an emotional response when they feel like they coexist within the world. Horror is like hypnotism: For a participant to experience it, they must already want to experience it.

Using the senses: Aim to use three senses when describing scenes and two when describing interactions:

> **Example scene:** "The burning oil lamp greets you with fluttering shadows as you enter the shed. It does little to warm your bones from outside's chill or mask the woody smell of sawdust."

> **Example interaction:** "You feel the jewellery box's paint fleck as you lift it. The box creaks gently as its lid opens."

Fake-outs: Building tension toward a scare that never happens can be an occasionally-useful tool - but use it sparingly. There are only so many times the disturbing noise can just be a cat.

Levity: A game which is always grim eventually becomes a caricature of itself. Make sure to also convey beauty, joy, and even some comedy in your narration.

Vague and evocative: Draw players towards conclusions evenly with steady escalation. Let their imagination do the legwork of filling in the details. A room of gore evokes terror - but red stains build tension.

Evoking Terror

The moment uneasiness gives way to fright might come from an attack, a horrific revelation, or a tragedy.

Natural consequences: Players should feel that their own actions have lead to whatever outcome they are now experiencing. Players shouldn't feel that their misfortunes have been arbitrary.

Plot via panic: If the party risk their lives, the least you can do is have it be a source of lore. Players often won't ask, so try to voluntarily offer up some point of interest they might gleam from their encounter.

Intimidation: Villains and monsters should feel intimidating - rarely pushovers. Certain adjustments must be made to ensure sessions aren't all PC bloodbaths:

> **Keep escape in sight:** Running is always an option unless players have already refused every safe avenue.

> **Feline mentality:** Many enemies - and certainly sapient villains - should enjoy toying with the heroes. Exploiting hubris should be a popular tool in the players' arsenals.

> **Exploit sentimentality:** Instead of death and destruction always falling upon the players: Build up PC relationships with characters, objects, and places. Look toward those so that what PCs have to lose isn't always their lives. At the same time: Don't make *everything* your target. PCs require places of safety to reset to after bouts of trauma, as well as sources of pride they as players have worked for.

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