

A murderer roams London's Paddington district—but is it man or beast?

Lord Henry Abbot recently returned from a year-long antique buying trip to Rome. On his return, he found that his wife, Abigail, had died of "tumors" (cancer). Their son, young Fulton Abbot, is inconsolable. Lord Henry is not a loving man, but he gave his grieving boy one of the many relics he brought back from Italy—a small statue of a strange looking dog.

As his father grows more distant and cold, Fulton clings ever tighter to his "lion hound." He even sleeps with it at night, drenching the antique ceremonial effigy in his tears—and calling for the legendary *crocotta*.

## ANSWERING THE CALL

Three nights ago, Buckminster "Buck" Nelson was found slain in an alley in London's Paddington district. Over the next three nights, two more perished in the same grisly fashion. Officially, he was stabbed then ravaged by stray dogs, but one of the constables knows of the Rippers and sends word to the party. Something beastly is on the loose in west London and he needs their help.

The heroes meet with their friend shortly after dinner. It's cool with occasional drizzling rain—fairly pleasant for London this time of year. Constable Robert Bobbins provides all the details he can about the victims:

- Buckminster "Buck" Nelson was a landlord in his 40s. He owned a number of row houses across town in east London. He was heavysset, bald, reasonably dressed (an average suit and hat), and wasn't liked by most.
- Charles LePont was killed the night after. He was a fifty-year-old French jeweler. He wasn't particularly prosperous, and word has it he often fenced goods for local thieves. He had a potbelly and thinning blonde hair. He had few friends in the neighborhood, so no one knows much else about him.
- The third victim was slain two nights after LePont, an undertaker named Frank Hughes.

All three men were walking home alone after shutting up their various businesses. All three were alone, passing through dark alleys or other isolated areas when they were attacked. Hughes is still in the local morgue but the others have been buried. Constable Bobbins says each one had savage claw marks about the chest, face, and throat—about the size of a large wolf paw. If the team

actually manages to look at Hughes' body, a Notice roll at -2 or a Knowledge (Medicine) roll reveals the claws were much longer than a traditional wolf's. A raise on the roll notes *no* trace of animal (or human) hair of any kind. The wounds are clean of the attacker's tissue.

The Rippers may also investigate each man's home. Nelson has a grieving wife, LePont lived alone, and Hughes is a widower. Some incriminating evidence may be found in LePont's home concerning his fencing operations, but the others seem exactly as they appeared.

## LEGWORK

The locals tend to go in after dark now, waiting for the authorities to stop the "Paddington Beast." Prior to that, the Rippers can put in a few hours of legwork to find more information. Reveal one of the following clues after a Streetwise roll, or two with a raise. This may be a group roll, but only give one or two clues per day—the investigation should stretch out over multiple encounters with the beast as detailed under **Caterwauling**.

- The murders happen between 8 and 9 pm each night.
- A mussel seller named Sally says she knew Charles LePont and saw him enter the alley where he was killed. He didn't usually take that particular alley, but someone called his name and he went in. She heard him yell, then an unholy caterwauling, as if by some kind of beast, and ran for her life. She only heard about his murder the next day. This is the first time anyone in authority has sought out her report.
- Several people in the neighborhood report paralyzed pets. Around 8 to 9 pm each night, within a few hundred yards of the murder scenes, pets bark or hiss for a few seconds then go completely quiet. When the owners check on them, they're paralyzed. Most recover 10-15 minutes later, but a few have died...likely from a stopped heart.
- Triangulating the murder sites on a map indicates the killer likely lives somewhere around Edgware Rd near the intersection with Marylebone Rd.





- The victims are always middle aged, heavyset men with thin or balding hair, wearing suits and hats. They don't seem to have similar backgrounds, but have the same general appearance.
- The murder scenes aren't preserved so Tracking rolls turn up nothing of use, but the skill can be used if the Rippers respond to a new attack (see below).

## STAKEOUT

The Rippers can stake out Edgeware Road over the following nights. (This is a great time for an Interlude.) Around 8 pm each night, roll a die. Odd, nothing happens (or insert an encounter of your own). Even, the creature strikes again. The Rippers and any nearby townsfolk hear the screams of the victim and the most awful animal-like screams—as if from a great cat if anyone has been to a zoo or heard such animals.

When the Rippers run toward the caterwauling, they find a man being attacked in some dark and isolated area—such as an alley or a dark section of street. Standing over him is a horrid dog-like thing with a mouth full of unnatural jagged fangs.

If the victim is already dead, the beast is tearing him apart but not actually devouring any of the flesh. When attacked, it responds in kind. See the **Crocotta**, below.

Once slain, the crocotta fades to a bluish mist—and has the same chance of returning the following night. The thing now knows its slayer's names if any were spoken in its presence and will seek them out instead of its usual preferred victims (those who look something like Lord Henry Abbot—see below). In doing so, the creature can whisper their names or use other tricks, such as crying like a baby, to lure them into dark alleys or other areas where it has advantage.

## CATERWAULING

After the party has defeated the crocotta at least once, and when they actively patrol the streets and move around sometime between the hours of 8 pm and 9 pm, one of them hears the sounds of sobbing coming from a second story window somewhere along Edgeware. The home is middle class to upscale and is attended by a servant named Reynaud. Reynaud (d6 in all statistics) answers the door and must be negotiated with to speak with Lord Abbot or find out anything about the crying boy upstairs.

Little Fulton goes to bed promptly at 8 pm so that his father can sulk alone downstairs. He sleeps with the effigy of the crocotta, an allegedly mythical creature first recorded by Pliny in 77 AD. One of the conquering Roman legions of Ethiopia brought the effigy home nearly two thousand years ago and it eventually wound up for sale at auction in Rome, where it was bought by Lord Abbot and bestowed upon his distraught son.

## RELIC: THE CROCOTTA EFFIGY

This statue allows one to summon a spirit crocotta by shedding at least three tears on it. The thing forms and roams nearby, looking for whatever it interprets as enemies of its summoner. It is this that makes summoning the thing dangerous and erratic. The Ethiopian shaman who first created it used it against the Romans, but later the thing turned on his own chief when the shaman felt threatened by his growing jealousy. If not stopped, it will soon kill Lord Abbot, Reynaud the butler, and even little Fulton himself.

While the summoned creature is flesh and blood and can be killed normally, it returns each time its linked effigy is bathed in tears—but no more than once each day and night. The creature is not consciously controlled. It acts on the *emotions* of whoever summoned it, but as a quasi-demonic presence, eventually twists that to its own ends. While Fulton Abbot sleeps with it, it slays men who look like his father, who he subconsciously blames for not being here when his mother died.



## THE CROCOTTA

Though most scholars think the Romans mistook descriptions of hyenas for the crocotta (and the related leucrotta), the truth in the world of Rippers is far more sinister. These ancient monsters still roam the wild of Africa, imitating the sounds of humans (babies in distress are a special favorite) and slaying those lone Samaritans who attempt to help.

**Attributes:** Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

**Skills:** Climbing d10, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d8, Swimming d6

**Pace:** 8; **Parry:** 7; **Toughness:** 7

**Special Abilities:**

- **Bite / Claw:** Str+d8.
- **Fleet-Footed:** The crocotta rolls a d10 when running instead of a d6.
- **Improved Frenzy:** The crocotta can make two bite / claw attacks each round at no penalty.
- **Imitation:** Crocottas can imitate any voice they hear. Their speech is limited to basic sounds, though much like parrots, they can repeat any name they've heard spoken in their presence. They can also project it up to 20 yards distant from their actual position.

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OCTOBER 22ND!