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Escaped Terror

By Philip Reed

Setup

A vicious creature has escaped from a traveling freak show and is now rampaging through the streets of a small town in the Midwest. The creature has eaten or torn to shreds dozens of townspeople and the mayor is about to beg the state governor for help – just as the player characters pass through town. GMs can get the players involved with the escaped creature in any number of ways, including:

- The PCs are members of Department-7's cryptozoology division. They're alerted to the rampage and flown in with orders to locate, identify, and capture the creature (if it is not in Department-7's library of species).
- The PCs are traveling across the country and stop for gas in a small town when a horrible creature streaks out of the darkness and kills an attendant at the station. Leaping over the awe-stricken PCs, the beast crashes on their vehicle – destroying it – and



then disappears in the darkness. They must now contend with the creature while attempting to escape this small town.

- The PCs are part of the local police force and must protect the town's citizens and attempt to contain the creature until a National Guard force can arrive to destroy it.
- The PCs are part of a competing freak show and were trying to steal the beast when it escaped. They must now capture it and flee town before their actions are discovered or the military destroys their prize.

This *Dispatch* issue is more of an adventure tool-kit than an actual adventure. I've presented some tools and options in this PDF that a GM can piece together to either design an adventure following the basic suggestions included herein or add the elements to an adventure of his own design. It is my hope that you'll find the elements in this PDF useful in your campaign.

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About the Author

Philip Reed has been working professionally in the roleplaying game industry since 1995. In that time he has worked for such companies as Atlas Games, Paradigm Concepts, Steve Jackson Games, and Dork Storm Press. Today Philip spends his days at home running Ronin Arts, writing and designing new games, and resisting the lure of console games as he tries to focus on writing. To learn more about Philip Reed – and Ronin Arts – please visit www.roninarts.com.

Timeline of Events

The following timeline presents the events that may take place between the escape of the beast and the arrival of the state National Guard. This timeline can be used as a rough guide for the GM while he thrusts the PCs into this short side-story. The actions of the player characters can, of course, influence this timeline – but it’s a good starting point for the GM.

12:00 pm (noon): The creature either escapes from its cage while the freak show is filling up their trucks. A faulty lock, human negligence, or theft are all reasons for the creature’s escape. The escape is loud and violence-filled as several customers are attacked by the creature during its escape. One victim may be drug off by the beast, the victim’s screams piercing the other sounds of the resulting panic and commotion.

12:10 pm: The owners of the escaped creature flee town as quickly as they can. They have no insurance or permits for the creature and are looking to avoid the cops. They’re last seen headed west in an older model rig.

12:20 pm: Local law enforcement arrive on the scene and begin questioning survivors. They call in animal control to deal with the escaped “bear.” No matter how much the police are told that the escaped creature is not a bear, and no matter how fanciful the story is of the creature’s appearance and escape, the police continue referring to the creature as a bear for the remainder of the situation (until they see the creature).

12:35 pm: Reports come in from the local school that a lion ran across the school grounds just moments after the children returned inside from recess. No casualties are reported.

12:42 pm: A local news crew arrives on the scene and begins interviewing witnesses, police – anyone that will talk about the incident.

12:55 pm: Animal control arrives on the scene equipped with a tranq gun and a net. The local animal control officer is Alexander Kuhn, 55 years old, overweight, and lazy. Kuhn arrives alone and listens to the police for about five to ten minutes before he sets off in the direction the creature was last seen headed.

1:08 pm: A report comes in from the local diner. A “hideous monster” crashed through the diner killing four people and wounding a dozen more. A few police reach the scene within five minutes but whatever is causing the problem is gone.

1:20 pm: Alexander Kuhn, the animal control officer, comes into contact with something. The police radio crackles and screeches as Kuhn desperately tries to call for help. His truck and parts of his body are found several minutes later. Tracks of something big lead off into the town’s park.

1:33 pm: A big “monster” races through the local bowling alley, killing two and wounding eight others. One of the dead is a local, off-duty cop. Witnesses report that the cop managed to shoot the beast before

it killed him. Several describe it as a giant armadillo.

1:48 pm: Something “out of a nightmare” is reported at a local church. The creature killed a priest and wounded a handyman that tried to stop it.

1:55 pm: The mayor calls the governor and begs for assistance.

2:15 pm: A police car is destroyed when the escaped creature jumps on it. The creature appears to be circling the town now, trying to consume as much food as possible while hiding amongst the buildings. Several eyewitnesses report that they’ve seen the creature climbing the buildings and leaping from roof to roof.

2:30 pm: Word spreads around town that the National Guard is coming in to deal with the menace. National Guard troops are expected to arrive in force by 5:00.

2:48 pm: The creature attacks and kills two at a local beauty parlor.

3:14 pm: Another police officer is killed while trying to protect citizens from the rampaging beast. Rumors begin to spread that there are actually several monsters loose on the streets.

Clear the Streets

The National Guard works fast to clear all unauthorized personnel from the city streets. Anyone that refuses to cooperate is arrested. Those with military or government law enforcement IDs – including Department-7 – are allowed to remain on the streets. But the troops will not assist in capturing whatever is loose. They’re here to kill it.

If the player characters exchange weapons fire with National Guard troops even more troops, and helicopter support, is immediately dispatched to the area.

3:37 pm: Four more people are killed at the gas station where the creature first escaped. Why it has returned back to that location is unknown. Children in the school are kept inside and two police are charged with protecting the school until this crisis has been solved.

4:44 pm: National Guard troops enter the city and declare a state of emergency. All citizens are ordered off the streets as the military tracks down and kills the beast. It should take anywhere from an hour to several (1d10 hours should work) before the streets are declared safe.

What is the beast?

The exact nature of the escaped animal depends on the focus of your campaign. If the campaign is a normal world setting, without magic or the supernatural, the beast is a wild boar or bear that has been painted and has spikes and other terrible items glued to its body. In a near-future campaign

the beast may be a genetically created monster while in an arcane campaign – or one dealing with extraterrestrials – the beast can be almost anything.

Following are a few possible creatures. These can be used as the actual creature or as inspiration for creatures of the GMs design. Normal creatures are not included – see D20 Modern for a section of animals that can be used as the “beast” in a campaign in which magic, the supernatural, or aliens do not play a role.

Author’s Note: The creatures presented in this section were created by applying selected portions of monster templates to normal animals found in the Modern SRD. Rather than use the templates as written, I customized each creature to fit my own needs. The templates can be found in a book currently on the market – see the Section 15 information for the book’s name and publisher. I highly recommend the book listed there.

A Multitude of Escapees and Complications

Obviously, if the player characters are of such a high level that a single escaped beast is no challenge it is acceptable to have two, three, four, or even more creatures loose. In such an event, I’d recommend using a wide variety of creatures – both unusual and mundane – in the scenario.

To make things even more challenging, place a competing team in the town. Perhaps it’s an enemy of Department-7 out to grab one or more of these creatures in order to breed an animalistic weapon to use against Department-7. Or, if the PCs are with a freak show, it’s a competing freak show trying to grab the creatures for themselves. It is even possible that a few tabloid “journalists” are trying to grab a smaller creature to feature in their supermarket rag. No matter the experience level of the PCs, there’s always one more complication that can be heaped onto the problem.

Rather than take space here, statistics for enemy agents, rival freak show members, or military men can be found in the **D20 Modern** rulebook or SRD – the GM needs only select appropriate stat blocks. Some recommendations include using a thug or criminal as a rival freak show member, a reporter for a tabloid “journalist,” and police officer for the local law.

Bear of Unspeakable Cold

This large, powerful polar bear has long, obsidian-black claws and cruel, twisted teeth that protrude from its mouth. Unlike most bears, the bear of unspeakable cold – as its known to its owners – appears wild and angered at all times. Those coming within 10 feet of the creature report a marked, sudden downshift in temperature.

The bear was sold to the freak show by a Canadian hunter that trapped it somewhere in the far northern Canadian wastes. The hunter lost an arm to frostbite in the adventure and was happy to be free of the creature – especially since the freak show paid handsomely for the bear.

Species Traits

The bear of unspeakable cold has the following traits.

Cold Aura (Ex): The bear of unspeakable cold emits an aura of cold that can wound nearby creatures. Anyone that comes within 10 ft. of the bear of unspeakable cold takes 2d6 points of damage per round that they remain within range of the bear. A successful DC 21 Fortitude save reduces the damage to half.

Icy Touch (Ex): Anyone that makes a successful touch attack against the bear of unspeakable cold suffers 1d6 points of damage and must make a DC 21 Fortitude save or be paralyzed for 1d4 rounds.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the bear of unspeakable cold must hit with a claw attack.

Scent (Ex): This ability allows a bear of unspeakable cold to detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell.

Bear of Unspeakable Cold: CR 5; Large animal; HD 6d8+32; hp 59; Mas 19; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 15, touch 10, flat-footed 14 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural); BAB +4; Grap +16; Atk +11 melee (1d8+8, claw); Full Atk +11 melee (1d8+8, 2 claws),

+6 melee (2d8+4 bite); FS 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SQ Cold aura, icy touch, improved grab, low-light vision, scent; AL none; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +3; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 27, Dex 13, Con 23, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +18, Listen +6, Spot +6.

Feats: None.

Advancement: 7–10 HD (Large).

Plague Lizard

This black monitor lizard measures 10 feet long and is covered in a greenish-gray muck that seems to drip from its body. The creature is covered in countless boils and open sores but still retains its appearance as a sleek and fast, powerful reptile.

The plague lizard was created by a military group intent on developing a weapon to use against its enemies. How the creature came to be in the possession of a traveling freak show is unknown but you can rest assured that its creators are intent on capturing it (and silencing any that may know its origin).

Species Traits

The plague lizard has the following traits.

Carrier (Ex): Although the plague lizard is immune to diseases, it can still carry infections and continues to do so regardless of arcane, scientific, or extraterrestrial interference or successful Fortitude saves.

Disease (Ex): With a successful melee touch attack the plague lizard infects its victim a sickness much like the dreaded hantavirus. The victim must succeed a DC 14 Fortitude save or contract a sickness like hantavirus (it is so close to the hantavirus that it's easier just to use the statistics for that disease, see *D20 Modern*).

Immunity to Disease (Ex): A plague lizard is immune to the effects of all diseases.

Poison (Ex): Bite—Fortitude negates; save DC 10 + 1/2 the plague lizard's Hit Dice + its Constitution modifier; 1d6 Dex/1d6 Dex.

Poison Spray (Ex): Once every 1d4 rounds, the plague lizard can spray poison in a 15-foot cone. See above for the effects of the poison.

Skill Bonuses: Plague lizards gain a +4 species bonus on Hide and Move Silently checks. In forested or overgrown areas, the bonus on Hide checks improves to +8.

Plague Lizard: CR 4; Medium-size animal; HD 3d8+9; hp 22; Mas 17; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., swim 30 ft.; Defense 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13 (+2 Dex, +3 natural); BAB +2; Grap +5; Atk +5 melee (1d8+4, bite); Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+4, bite); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Carrier, disease, immunity to disease, poison, poison spray; AL none; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +2; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 17, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 2.

Skills: Climb +9, Hide +7 (+11 in overgrown or forested areas), Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Spot +4.

Feats: None.

Advancement: 4–5 HD (Medium-size); 6–12 HD (Large).

Poisonous Tiger

The poisonous tiger greatly resembles the common, natural tiger. The only significant appearance change is a slightly thicker coat of fur and a dark, green substance dripping from the tiger's claws. Poisonous tigers are specially bred monstrosities that Department-7 agents have encountered in the past. Whether their creators are evil humans or manipulative aliens is unknown and Department-7 agents will do anything in their power to trace a poisonous creature to its creator.

This particular poisonous tiger is untagged and escaped from a military installation several years ago.

It was purchased by the traveling freak show and has been an important attraction for almost three years.

Species Traits

The poisonous tiger has the following traits.

Immunity to Poison (Ex): Poisonous tigers are immune to all poisons.

Poison (Ex): The tiger's claw attack delivers an injected poison with each successful attack. The target must make a successful DC 16 Fortitude save. The poison's initial and secondary damage is 1d2 points of Constitution damage.

Pounce (Ex): If a poisonous tiger leaps upon a foe during the first round of combat, it can make a full attack even if it has already taken a move action.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the poisonous tiger must hit with a claw or bite attack. If it gets a hold, it can rake (see below).

Rake (Ex): A poisonous tiger that gets a hold of its target can make two rake attacks (+9 melee) with its hind legs for 1d8+6 points of damage each. If the poisonous tiger pounces on an opponent, it can also rake.

Skill Bonuses: Poisonous tigers receive a +4 species bonus on Balance, Hide, and Move Silently checks. In areas of tall grass or heavy undergrowth, their Hide bonus improves to +8.

Poisonous Tiger: CR 5; Large animal; HD 6d8+28; hp 55; Mas 17; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 14, touch 11, flat-footed 12 (–1 size, +2 Dex, +3 natural); BAB +4; Grap +14; Atk +9 melee (1d8+6, claw); Full Atk +9 melee (1d8+6, 2 claws), +4 melee (2d6+3, bite); FS 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Immunity to poison, poison, pounce, improved grab, rake 1d8+3, low-light vision; AL none; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +3; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 23, Dex 19, Con 17, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Balance +6, Hide +5 (+9 in tall grass or undergrowth), Listen +3, Move Silently +9, Spot +3,

Swim +11.

Feats: None.

Advancement: 7–12 HD (Large); 13–18 HD (Huge).

Ravenous Hippopotamus

A ravenous hippopotamus is a crazed, ever-hungry beast that is driven to terrible acts of violence when it is starved and cruelly treated. It is said that a ravenous creature, including a ravenous hippopotamus is tainted by evil arcane, charged with a demonic essence that feeds on its misery. The creature is ideally suited to life in a cage where it can scare those in small towns. A ravenous creature that escapes captivity and its cruel masters will not go down without a fight and will give its life in order to avoid returning to its cruel existence in the cage.

Species Traits

The ravenous hippopotamus has the following traits.

Hold Breath (Ex): A ravenous hippopotamus can seal its nostrils by muscular action and hold its breath for a number of rounds equal to its Constitution score \times 10.

Ravenous Body (Su): A ravenous hippopotamus can eat other food but only flesh of a living, moving creature satiates its hunger. It must feed on living flesh at least once every three days or suffer the effects of starvation.

Scent (Ex): This ability allows a ravenous hippopotamus to detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell.

Skill Bonus: A hippopotamus is agile in the water, gaining a +4 species bonus on Swim checks.

Ravenous Hippopotamus: CR 7; Large animal; HD 8d8+56; hp 92; Mas 20; Init +1; Spd 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; Defense 15, touch 9, flatfooted 15 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +6 natural); BAB +6; Grap +17; Atk +12 melee (2d6+10, bite); Full Atk +12 melee (2d6+10, bite); FS 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ hold breath, low-light vision, ravenous body, scent; AL none; SV Fort +11, Ref +5, Will +3; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 30, Dex 13, Con 24, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 3.

Skills: Listen +7, Swim +11.

Feats: None.

Advancement: 9–16 HD (Large); 17–24 HD (Huge).

Saurian Boar

A saurian boar is a genetically-modified beast created by an unidentified race of extraterrestrials that have been studying the Earth for several decades. The saurian boar's hide is covered with gray scales and along the spine short plates protrude from the boar's body. The average saurian boar stands 3 feet high at the shoulder and measures roughly 4 feet long. Its formidable, yellowed tusks protrude from its lower jaw and can grow up to 12 inches long. The creature's legs end in long, terrible claws that it uses to attack others.

Species Traits

The saurian boar has the following traits.

Ferocity (Ex): A saurian boar is so fiercely aggressive in combat that it continues fighting even when disabled or dying.

Leaping Pounce (Ex): When a saurian boar charges a foe and jumps at least the last 10 feet of it, it may make a full attack, including two rake attacks.

Rake (Ex): Against a creature with which it grapples, a saurian boar may make two secondary rake attacks that deal claw damage.

Scent (Ex): This ability allows a saurian boar to detect approaching enemies, sniff out hidden foes, and track by sense of smell.

Saurian Boar: CR 4; Medium-size animal; HD 3d8+10; hp 25; Mas 17; Init +0; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 18, touch 10, flatfooted 18 (+8 natural); BAB +2; Grap +4; Atk +4 melee (1d8+3, gore, 1d4 claw); Full Atk +4 melee (1d8+3, gore); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ ferocity, leaping pounce, low-light vision, rake, scent; AL none; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +2; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 15, Dex 10, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 13, Cha 4.

Skills: Jump +8, Listen +7, Spot +5.

Feats: None.

Advancement: 4–5 HD (Medium-size).