

"I became insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity." —Edgar Allan Poe

This short expansion introduces several notable elements of Edgar Allan Poe's many Gothic works directly into the *Leagues of Gothic Horror* universe. The "Story" entry in the gazetteer section is the one in which Poe detailed the location.

Bloodline Talents

Bloodline Talents were first introduced in *Leagues of Cthulhu*, but the idea of accursed ancestors has its roots deep in Gothic literature. Bloodline Talents are each slightly more powerful than a conventional Talent. That is because each family has one or more skeletons in the closet. These hidden flaws are not described to the players—while the Gamemaster has information on them (see *Skeletons in the Closet*), a globetrotter gains knowledge of their family's ancestral banes only through investigation or experience.

A globetrotter can only have one Bloodline Talent.

It is worth noting that while a character may belong to a specific bloodline, they might not actually carry that name. This is especially true in instances where a globetrotter traces descent through the maternal line. Indeed, while the player knows their character's heritage, the globetrotter may actually be utterly unaware that their family is anything unusual—at least until the taint they bear issues forth.

Bloodline: Metzengerstein

Unique; Only available at character creation

Prerequisites: None

A noble Hungarian family, the once-powerful but now diminished Metzengersteins have since spread their blood across much of Europe and even into the New World. The family has long been feuding with the House of Berlitzing.

Benefit: The globetrotter begins play with Diplomacy 0, Status 1 (Aristocrat), and fluency in the Finno-Ugric language group. These are in addition to the regular four 0-level Skills and two 0-level Resources all characters receive.

Normal: Your character receives no additional free Skill or Resources.

Bloodline: Pym

Unique; Only available at character creation

Prerequisites: None

The call of the sea echoes through the blood of many of the Pym family, whose ancestors were whalers and sailors in the Age of Sail. Even today, many Pym are comfortable on the water. Through ancient ties, the family is known to many civilian nautical captains and shipowners.

Benefit: The globetrotter begins play with Pilot: Nautical 0 and Survival 0. Also, you gain Contacts 1 (Nautical Transportation). These are in addition to the regular four 0-level Skills and two 0-level Resources all characters receive.

Normal: Your character receives no additional free Skill or Resources.

Bloodline: Usher

Unique; Only available at character creation

Prerequisites: None

The Usher family is an ancient line whose name has become synonymous with their ancestral manse—the House of Usher. Some say the family is too old, and has fallen into the mire of moral and spiritual decadence.

Benefit: The globetrotter begins play with Connoisseur 0 and Performance 0. Also, you gain Status 1 (Scion of the House of Usher). These are in addition to the regular four 0-level Skills and two 0-level Resources all characters receive.



Appendix 1:

Edgar Allan Poe

Author: Paul Wade-Williams

Editing: Anthony Boyd

Graphic Design: Robin Elliott



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Normal: Your character receives no additional free Skill or Resources.

Skeletons in the Closet

Listed below are the hidden costs of having a Bloodline Talent. Where a bloodline has a Corruption entry, the Flaw manifests the first time the globetrotter gains five points of Corruption. Rather than receiving a Flaw chosen by the Gamemaster, the globetrotter automatically gains a predetermined Flaw.

Metzengerstein

Frederick, Baron Metzengerstein, was the first to manifest the taint that still haunts the family to this day. He was a man of overt treachery, shameful debauchery, and vile atrocities. It was ultimately his murderous pyromaniacal tendencies that would cause his name to be spoken of only rarely by his descendants.

Corruption: The globetrotter gains the Obsession: Pyromania Flaw. This is permanent, even if the globetrotter removes all their Corruption points.

Pym

A curse of sorts seems to flow in the veins of the Pym. Most live a normal life, but in some there is a taint that draws dangers and mystery in equal measure.

Corruption: The globetrotter gains the Weirdness Magnet Flaw. This is permanent, even if the globetrotter removes all their Corruption points.

Usher

The House of Usher is old, and with great age comes frailty. In this case, the frailty is of the spirit. A general weariness and melancholy descends on many Ushers of weak moral fiber.

Corruption: The globetrotter gains the Malaise Flaw. This is permanent, even if the globetrotter removes all their Corruption points.



The House of Usher

Story: *The Fall of the House of Usher*

Suggested Entity: Apparitions (Banshee, Child, Grief, or Shadow from *Guide to Apparitions* and Giberling, Leech, or Lost from *Leagues of Gothic Horror Expansion* work best)

Location: United States of America

Eerie Atmosphere: -2

The ancestral seat of the Usher family is a bleak and

depressing structure. Accessed by a walkway that spans the precipitous banks of a tarn whose waters flow an inky black, the manse is partially shrouded by rank sedges and decaying, white-barked trees. The house itself is equally tarnished, its neglected walls covered in strands of fungus like the webs of a monstrous spider.

Like its inhabitants—the last members of the direct Usher family—the furnishings are tired. Drab tapestries, floors of black stone, mildewed windows, scratched and tattered furniture, and various armorial trophies tell of better, more vibrant, times. Even the air seems heavy with an air of sorrow.

Deep beneath the foundations, and reached only by a narrow spiral staircase, is a vault. In days long past the space was used to store gunpowder, as evidenced by the floor, which was plated in copper so ensure hobnailed boots could make no spark on the raw stonework, and the thickness of its iron door. For the last few generations, the Ushers have encoffined their familial dead here.

Although not a haunted house, the building has a spirit of sorts. The sadness and despair that has befallen the decadent Usher family has corrupted the very stones of the house with the same feelings. Each morning, visitors must make a Willpower x 2 roll (Difficulty 3) or suffer the Depressed Flaw until they have vacated the house for at least 24 hours.

Adventure Seed: A scion of the House of Usher, perhaps a personal friend of a globetrotter or given their name by a friend of a friend, asks the hero to visit his house. The Usher claims one of their siblings, recently deceased, now haunts them. They seek help in ending the spirit's torment.

Prospero's Abbey

Story: *The Masque of the Red Death*

Suggested Entity: Prince Prospero (see below), The Red Death (*Leagues of Gothic Horror Expansion*)

Location: Italy

Eerie Atmosphere: -2

High in the Italian hills stand the remains of a grand building. With its high stone walls and gates of iron, the latter almost rusted to the point of extinction, it has been described as a castle. In truth it was once an abbey, though what order of monks may have worshiped here no one recalls. The inhabitants of the nearest villages are loathe to venture close to the sagging edifice, yet all know the tales of its downfall.

The abbey was once the property of Prince Prospero (surname forgotten). Recalled as a man of great wealth and poor moral fortitude, he bade a thousand of his courtiers to come to his abbey at a time when a virulent plague—the Red Death—struck the land. With provisions enough to last years, they sealed themselves inside and left the peasants to endure a brief but agonizing death.

In rooms furnished entirely in blue, purple, green, orange, white, violet, and black respectively, they danced without care, pausing their revels briefly only when a great ebony clock struck each hour.

Appendix 1: Edgar Allan Poe

The plague eventually ran its scarlet course, but no one ever emerged from Prospero's abbey. Toothless old men still recall terrible tales told to them when they were youths by their elders of how the Red Death crept into the walls and slew the revelers, although stories of mass poisoning by the prince are also told with equal gusto.

No doubt the wealthy guests brought with them a fortune in jewelry and coin, but no thief has ever had the boldness to scale the walls and lay claim to the treasures, such is the fear in which the building is held even centuries later.

The superstitious peasants of rural Italy are wise to shun the abbey, for the dead still roam the colored rooms. As the sun descends below the horizon, the ebony clock, whose hands relentlessly show the hours without the need for winding, begins to toll the hour. The dead manifest, their archaic costumes dotted with spots of blood. From dusk until midnight they dance and whirl and bleed and silently scream to the music of an unseen orchestra, forever denied a place in the afterlife by the will of their master, Prince Prospero. Although they are apparitions, they perform no interaction with the world, being little more than vague shadows of their former selves.

On the anniversary of their mass deaths, they are joined by an additional guest. As midnight strikes, the Red Death walks among them.

Adventure Seed: A historian believes that exploring Prospero's abbey may reveal many clues about life in the prince's era. It may also solve the mystery of what ailment the Red Death actually was. The historian seeks aid from fellow historians, scientists, and doctors of medicine.

The Valley of Many-Colored Grass

Story: *Eleonora*

Suggested Entity: None

Location: The Dreamlands (see *Cthulhu Codicil*)

Eerie Atmosphere: 0

An idyll within the Dreamlands, the vista of the Valley of Many-Colored Grass varies depending on the nature of the visitor.

For those who have never had their hearts filled with the pleasure and anguish of true love, it is a drab place, certainly not worthy of its name. A solitary brook, the River of Silence, runs narrow and deep across the grass-covered valley floor, the green grass that covers the earth broken only by flowers of dark violet hue. No animals disturb the ground, water, or air. The only hint of fragrance is a faint perfume that fills the air, yet has no obvious source.

For those whose heart beats to the rhythm of true love, the Valley of Many-Colored Grass has an Eden-like quality. Here the waters of the River of Silence laugh and sing with joy, and the grass is a lush, short, vanilla-perfumed carpet speckled with vibrantly-colored, star-shaped flowers. Groves of slender trees of ebony and silver-speckled bark, their large leaves swaying in the breeze, provide adequate shade for wanderers.

No ground animals disturb the grass, though fish with silver and gold scales swim in the River of Silence and the towering trees are home to colorful birds.

Only a single building breaks the natural bliss of the Valley of Many-Colored Grass. Rather than a blight, as the hand of work of humanity often is, its presence only enhances the beauty. Carved in pure white marble in the style of a Greek temple, its smooth surface is marked by a solitary word—Eleonora.

Adventure Seed: Madness takes many shapes. One man (or woman, if you prefer) dreams of an idyllic valley of unimaginable beauty. Here he has seen the star-shaped flowers that have no earthly counterpart, and yet his curse is to look and never touch. Each morn he wakes and weeps. Deeply in love, he desires above all one of those perfect flowers, for surely a gift so wondrous would turn him from suitor to paramour.



Prince Prospero

Prospero is the root of his own downfall. In life, the prince believed he could cheat the Red Death and thus preserve his life of gaiety and pleasure. Frustrated to the point of madness that his plans were foiled and his grand ball brought to a bloody end, he forces his now-ghostly courtiers to continue their revelry until such time as *he* decides it must end. Naturally, that terminus will never be announced. His Preservation Motivation is thus a very warped version. On the anniversary of his death, however, he seeks revenge against the Red Death when it once again visits his abbey.

During the day, Prospero may manifest in corporeal form. His speech is archaic, as are his clothes. Courteous as in life, he invites his "guests" to remain until the evening, when he is hosting a masked ball. While he is corporeal, the former splendor of the abbey is reinstated. Prospero can offer his guests accommodation, costumes, and even food and drink. Once the sun sets, Prospero is forced into his ethereal state while the furnishings, centuries old, rapidly rot.

Prince Prospero

Patron 2

Archetype: *Ghostly Aristocrat*; **Motivation:** *Preservation/Revenge*; **Style:** 2

Primary Attributes: Body 0, Dexterity 3, Strength 2, Charisma 4, Intelligence 2, Willpower 7

Secondary Attributes: Size 0, Move 5, Perception 9, Initiative 5, Defense 10*, Stun N/A**, Health 11**, Horror — (unless he uses Manifestation)

Skills: Connoisseur 6, Diplomacy 6, Empathy 6, Intimidation 7, Melee 6, Performance 7

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Talents: Fearsome (Can temporarily frighten foes), Time Sense (always knows the time)

Resources: Refuge: Equipment 1 (+2 Haunting points between dusk and midnight)

Powers: Activate (see below), Corporeal Form, Lacerate (spectral dagger), Manifestation, Possession, Speech, Suggestion

Flaws: Ephemeral (Cannot communicate or use tools except through applicable special powers)***, Short Temper (+1 Style point whenever his short temper causes trouble)

Weapons: Punch 0N, Dagger 7L (only when corporeal)

* *Defense is equal to Dexterity + Willpower.*

** *Spirits are immune to nonlethal damage, and cannot be stunned. In addition, only magical rituals, enchanted weapons, or weird science weapons created specifically for the purpose of harming incorporeal entities can inflict lethal damage. Health is based on Charisma + Willpower.*

*** *Can pass through solid matter as if it were air.*

Activate: Although the ghostly dancers are normally harmless, Prospero can transform them into pestilences (see *Guide to Apparitions*). This power can only be used when the revelers have Manifested and lasts until either the spirit is destroyed or the last bell of midnight ends.
Haunting points: 5.

Lacerate: Prospero can use this ability against animated targets (mortals or ghosts) only when Manifested.

Possession: Prospero can use this ability only on the anniversary of his death. Victims are forced to attack the Red Death.

Suggestion: Prospero has a stronger version of this ability. Instead of performing a simple action, the victim is forced to dance until the ebony clock next strikes the hour. As normal, the victim has no memory of his actions while under Prospero's influence.

Prospero's Ghostly Courtiers

Although they are ghosts, the spectral revelers are no threat to globetrotters, having no ability to affect them in any form. Unlike other ghosts, they automatically Manifest between dusk and midnight. Their sole form is that of the spirit in life, their skin blotched with blood and faces fixed in contortion of eternal.

Follower 0

Archetype: *Spirit*; **Motivation:** *Duty*; **Style:** 0

Primary Attributes: Body 0, Dexterity 2, Strength 2, Charisma 3, Intelligence 0, Willpower 2

Secondary Attributes: Size 0, Move 4, Perception 4, Initiative 2, Defense 4*, Stun N/A**, Health 5**, Horror 2

Skills: Performance 8

Talents/Resources: None

Powers: None

Flaws: Ephemeral (Cannot communicate or use tools)***

Weapons: None

Adventure Seeds

The Black Cat

A house-owning globetrotter discovers he has a new lodger—a black cat that keeps finding itself inside no matter the preventative measures the globetrotter takes. The cat is friendly enough, but soon after its arrival the globetrotter begins to suffer a spate of very poor luck. Are the two events linked? Should the globetrotter kill the cat, they gain the Animal Antipathy Flaw (with regard to cats only) and soon finds the entire cat world seems hellbent on scratching and biting them!

The Death of Poe

Edgar Allan Poe died on October 7, 1849 under mysterious circumstances. Missing between September 27 and October 3, the author was found delirious in a Baltimore tavern. He was said to be dressed in worn clothes that seemed ill-fitting, and with unkempt hair, unwashed face, and vacant eyes. Confined in the Washington College Hospital, he died several days later, having repeatedly called out the name “Reynolds.” All medical records concerning Poe's brief incarceration, as well as his death certificate, vanished soon after.

A fellow author and amateur historian contacts the globetrotters claiming that he knows the true cause of Poe's death and it was due to a supernatural entity.

The Life of Poe

The literary critic Rufus Griswold (1815-57) claimed in 1850 that Poe was a drunkard and drug-addict, although without presenting any evidence. If true, did Poe possess an addictive personality that led him to alcohol and narcotics, or did some event involving the supernatural drive him to such substances as a means of blotting out horrific memories?

Wrong Delivery

The postal service has made an error and delivered a globetrotter a letter intended for another person of similar name. Should the globetrotter open the letter, they discover it is a short message in a cipher. If the globetrotter returns it to the post office, it keeps getting delivered back to them. Taking the letter direct to the intended recipient only adds to the mystery—the person was murdered the same day the letter was delivered to the globetrotter. What does the message mean? Is someone actually prepared to kill to claim it? And if so, is the globetrotter now in their sights?

If the Gamemaster wishes to link this to one of Poe's stories, then *The Gold-Bug* is ideal—it includes a coded message indicating the location of Captain Kidd's treasure.