

Documentation

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The Merchant's End

Episode 1 of Shadows of the Unnamed - A Gothic Mystery for 3-6 Investigators (Levels 3-5)

"Some doors, once opened, can never truly be closed." - Inspector Hayes

Introduction

On a storm-wracked night in the merchant district of Ravencross, Theodore Blackwood - collector of curiosities and wealthy merchant - has been found dead in his study. The circumstances are bizarre: locked room, strange symbols drawn in ash, and his prized collection missing. Inspector Hayes, frustrated by his department's dismissal of the "unusual elements," seeks unofficial help.

Setting the Scene

The Blackwood Manor looms against the stormy sky, its Victorian architecture a testament to merchant wealth. Gas lamps cast wavering shadows across rain-slicked cobblestones as our investigators arrive. Thunder punctuates the scene as Wadsworth, the butler, opens the massive front door with impeccable timing.

The Players

- **Wadsworth:** "The study remains... exactly as we found it, *ahem*."
- **Mrs. Blackwood:** "Oh! The horror! The tragedy! The... line?"
- **Inspector Hayes:** *frantically scribbling in his notebook* "Nothing adds up... literally, in the ledger's case."

Act 1: Initial Investigation

The Study A locked-room mystery in burgundy and mahogany, now marred by death and strange symbols.

Key Features: - Body outline in chalk, surrounded by ash symbols - Empty display cases, still locked - Window mysteriously open despite being three stories up - Scattered research notes about “void-touched artifacts”

Initial Clues: 1. Butler’s footprints in ash (leads to questioning) 2. Void residue (glowing faintly under specific light) 3. Missing ledger pages (specific dates) 4. Purchase records of “questionable antiquities”

Dialogue Snapshot Hayes: “The window was locked from the inside?” Wadsworth: “Indeed sir. Most puzzling. Tea?” *Thunder crashes dramatically* Wadsworth: “I do apologize for the weather’s theatrical timing.”

Act 2: The Hunt Begins

The Gallery Long and shadowy, lined with ancestral portraits that seem to follow movement.

Investigation Elements: - Portrait eyes actually do move (mechanical secret) - Suit of armor that falls at perfect comedic moments - Hidden passage behind rotating painting - Chandelier that becomes vital during chase scene

Key Events: 1. First encounter with “ghosts” (obviously cultists in sheets) 2. Mrs. Blackwood’s melodramatic testimony 3. Discovery of secret passage network 4. Wadsworth’s perfectly-timed appearances

Notable Dialogue Mrs. Blackwood: “Theodore was acting strange ever since he acquired that... what was my line again?” Wadsworth: “The cursed artifact, madam.” Mrs. Blackwood: “Yes! The cursed artifact! swoons *unconvincingly*”

Act 3: Kitchen Chaos

The Great Chase A slapstick sequence through the service areas, revealing crucial evidence.

Chase Elements: - Sliding on soapy floors - Flying pots and pans - Dumbwaiter escape routes - Perfectly timed butler appearances

Service Area Features: - Multiple entrance/exit points - Dumbwaiter network connects floors - Steam pipes provide atmosphere - Storage areas hide cult materials

Action Sequence

1. Cultists flee through kitchen
2. Chaos erupts with cooking staff
3. Dumbwaiter network reveals secret
4. Evidence scattered during chase

Act 4: Confrontation

The Final Scene Hidden passage maze leads to dramatic revelation.

Confrontation Features: - Multiple cultist reveal - Butler’s surprising assistance - Secret passage navigation - Void magic manifestation

Critical Discoveries

1. Blackwood discovered void-touched artifacts
2. Cult needed items for ritual
3. Murder was secondary objective
4. Museum connection established

Conclusion

Success Conditions

- Several cultists captured
- Some artifacts recovered
- Hayes convinced of supernatural
- Connection to museum established

Consequences

- Cult aware of investigators
- Hayes becomes ally
- Void influence confirmed
- Museum investigation opens

Adventure Hooks

- Museum security detail needed
- Missing artifacts trace
- Cult retaliation incoming
- Void research continues

Running the Adventure

Tone Management

- Begin with classic haunted house
- Add comedy through NPCs
- Build genuine tension
- End with serious implications

Key NPC Notes

1. Wadsworth

- Timing is supernatural
- Knows hidden passages
- Actually loyal to Blackwood
- Makes excellent tea

2. Mrs. Blackwood

- Terrible actor, honest person
- Genuine grief behind act
- Knows more than she realizes
- Red herring supreme

3. Inspector Hayes

- First steps into strange
- Notebook holds vital clues
- Future important ally
- Currently overwhelmed

Maps and Locations

Main Floor

1. Grand Entrance
2. Gallery
3. Dining Room

4. Kitchen
5. Servants' Quarters

Upper Floor

1. Study
2. Library
3. Bedrooms
4. Storage
5. Hidden Passages

“Remember investigators, when the butler says ‘That’s most irregular,’ it’s probably a clue. When he appears behind you suddenly, it’s definitely a running gag.”



Figure 1: Classic D&D-style isometric mansion map featuring Victorian architecture. Two-floor layout showing: GROUND FLOOR with grand entrance, long gallery (with secret passages), dining room, and extensive kitchen. UPPER FLOOR with study (featuring void symbols), library, and connected hidden passage network. Include detailed furnishings, secret doors, and dumbwaiter system. Style: Traditional D&D dungeon map in sepia tones with blue grid, vintage parchment texture, Gothic decorative borders featuring Victorian architectural elements. Compass rose with mystical symbols.



Figure 2: A Victorian study at night during a thunderstorm. Mahogany bookshelves, empty display cases, and strange symbols drawn in ash on the floor. A body outline in chalk, with void-touched residue giving off an eerie glow. Gas lamps cast long shadows, and a butler's footprints are visible in the ash. Style: Gothic horror meets classic mystery, detailed architectural rendering with atmospheric lighting.



Figure 3: A dramatic chase scene in a Victorian mansion kitchen. Flying pots and pans, steam filling the air, and cultists in half-falling white sheets sliding across a soapy floor. A perfectly composed butler watches from a doorway, holding a tea tray without spilling a drop. Gas lamps and copper cookware provide warm highlights. Style: Dynamic action scene with elements of comedy, rendered in rich colors with dramatic lighting.