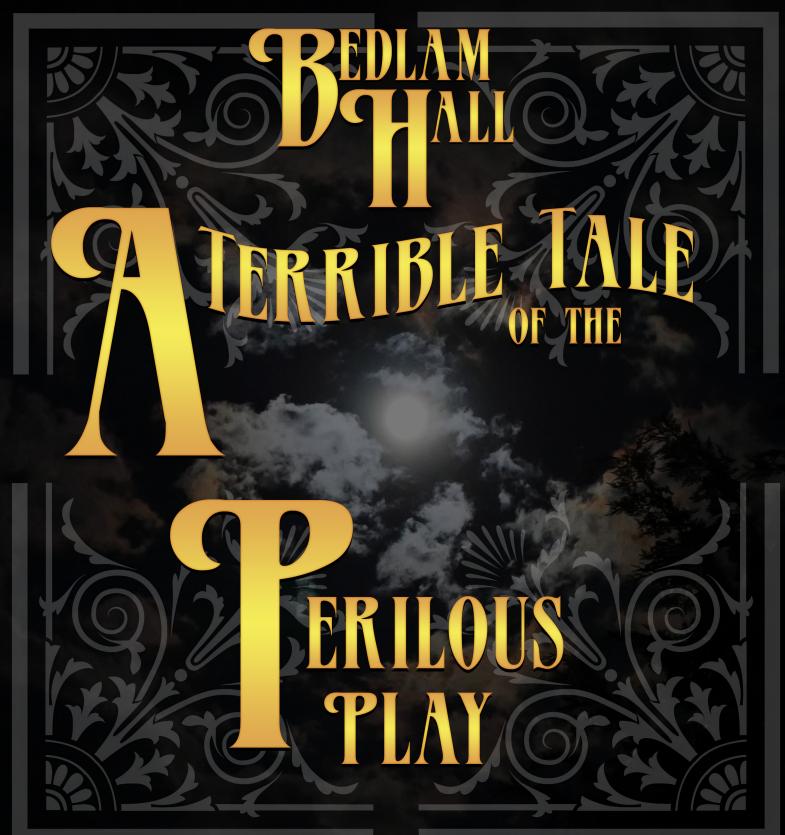
Monkeyfun Studios regrets



The fourth unfortunate adventure for 2-6 players





Monkeyfun Studios regrets

# BEDLAM DE TALE OF THE

# ERILOUS PLAY

The fourth unfortunate adventure for 2-6 players





# The List of Guilty Parties

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Viciously Written by: Alex Flanigan

Excerpts from the "Monarch in Marigold" written by: Sturmond Drang

The Continent's Most Dangerous Editor: Bryan Whitlock

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Laid out in Horrid Detail by: Terry Kasabian and Jadine Kizzia

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Special Thanks to: Jana Wright, Frank Pine and the Mighty Monkeyfun Performance Troupe - Kris Jensen, Christopher Dievendorf, Claudia Camarillo-Dievendorf, Allie Venable, and cinematographer extraordinaire, Matt "Ow, my face!" Collins

Extra Special Thanks to: D. Vincent Baker, Nathan D. Paoletta, Avery Alder, Keith Baker, Derek Tatum - the godfather of "dreadpunk", and of course Julian Fellowes and P.G. Wodehouse

"...It's all about the big laughs and monkeyfun..."



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# **Another Warning About Your Decisions**

#### Hello again, my lovelies -

Although we are deeply appreciative to make your acquaintance once again, we are highly worried about your choices, considering your interest in these wretched and unfortunate circumstances hereto contained within this Terrible Tale. Perhaps you may have a predilection for the ghastly and horrible maladies that are inflected upon our fellow man, a perverse delight in the misfortune of others. The concept is called "schadenfreude" in German, which may be appropriate as a definition but certainly not in practice. Was it not Shakespeare who wrote, "These horrible delights have terrible and vicious ends that end in tragedy and death?" It was something to that effect, we tend to fall asleep in the theatre.

However, let us provide you a full scope of what lies ahead.

#### This Terrible Tale includes:

- The Terrible Tale of the Perilous Play It's showtime with the introduction of the theatre arts to the Hall, as Lady Blackwood's newest fancy brings a troupe of questionable thespians into the chaos. Good thing their next production isn't a cursed manuscript, bringing doom and destruction to all who witness! Oh, is it?
- New Addition to the Household: The Abhorrent Ampitheatre In his trimming of the back yard, it would appear the Gardener has discovered a new addition to the House, an outside ampitheatre for the performance. Those weeds were apparently quite tall.
- The Monarch in Marigold, Act I As a precaution, we have only included the first act of the horrid play that was rumored to bring only death and terror. We're quite sure you'll be safe. Quite...

We wish you the most pleasant experience in your visit to **Bedlam Hall**. As the theatre people say, "Break a leg!" Although we admit, that was less than pleasant when it happened last summer during the masquerade ball.

Ta darlings,

~Your friends at Monkeyfun



# The Terrible Tale of The Perilous Play

This Terrible Tale is an introduction to the unsettling obsession with spiritualism and mediums that began in Victorian England and continued for many years afterward. We would like to let you know that this particularly Terrible Tale does not indicate a belief in the occult or the supernatural on our part, but as a Gemini we would naturally say such a thing.

# The Proper Use of This Terrible Tale

This material provides the Master of the House with multiple characters and story complications that can be used in conjunction with the player direction and input. Although additional options are provided, these are intended strictly as suggestions for the Master of the House and can be revised or ignored altogether based on the game's direction. In the end, it won't matter anyway. The lucky ones will die first, and the rest will just carry on their suffering as they normally do.

# A Preliminary Orientation

Lady Blackwood has become infected with that most pernicious of parasites, the theatre bug, becoming steadfastly convinced that a woman of her considerable social standing and arguable beauty must be in want of an audience. To this end, she has hired a touring theatrical troupe, the Perfervid Players, to make a weeklong residency at Bedlam Hall, under the stipulation that they produce a thrilling new work in which she is to take up a starring role. As if this weren't concerning enough in itself, she insists on treating the eccentric and somewhat suspicious entourage to all the perks and pleasures of a personal staff, a duty which has fallen to the players on top of their already extensive household responsibilities.

# **Initial Questions for the Staff:**

#### Go through the Staff:

- From what you have picked up in conversation, what is the nature of the piece the Players are to be performing at the end of the week?
- What rather notorious criminal does the leading man uncannily resemble? What was the most recent reported crime of this scalawag before his sudden disappearance?
- What bizarre dietary insistences has the Lady Blackwood demanded in preparation for her stage debut?
- Which of you has a surprising and previously unmentioned theatrical talent related to a chapter in your checkered past?



# Members and Guests of the Household:

### Lady Daffodil Blackwood

Quote: "Extraordinary innate talent is all the rage nowadays, there's simply nothing else like it!"

**Description:** Lady Blackwood has decided she'll be the envy of her peers by devoting her recently "discovered" talents and "natural" charms to a stage debut. Unfortunately, she has no knowledge whatsoever of the theatre and the obvious truth of this makes her extremely susceptible to suggestions...which she then insists were her own ideas.

**Trouble** In pursuit of furthering her abilities and stage expertise, Lady Blackwood has become utterly besotted with a method book from the family library, swearing by the effectiveness of its often questionable techniques and dedicating herself to the constant practice of what seem to be frankly absurd behaviors.

**Normal:** Daffodil is performing suspiciously unhelpful-sounding vocal warm-ups at any moment she is not actively rehearsing with the troupe. The sounds are barely human. No one is getting any sleep. Surely the frayed nerves of a household on the brink will not suffer this lightly or for long.

- Level 1 Lady Blackwood has begun pronouncing all of her vowels differently, often leading to miscommunications in her directions to the Staff with subsequent misfortunes following. She insists this is dialect work "in the classical French style."
- Level 2 Daffodil insists on pulling staff members away from important tasks to watch her (often poorly) balance expensive vases on her head, "for posture's sake."
- Level 3 Lady Blackwood keeps passing out at inopportune moments owing to a mistaken belief that locking one's knees and holding one's breath is a groundbreaking technique to improve breath support and engender an enviable complexion.

**Result:** Lady Daffodil has become quite delirious from exhaustion and oxygen deprivation, and insists on practicing stage combat in the main parlor with the sword from the family coat of arms. It is likely to result in property damage or significant bodily harm if she is not placated or engaged with.

#### Bagatha Blackwood (the middle daughter)

Quote: "It's pronounced INGENUE!"

**Description:** Bagatha has become quite enamored with the story of the Blackwood ancestor who fell into passionate, scandalous love with a travelling player and has become firmly determined that history is going to repeat itself. Of course, the aforementioned history does also include the incidental matter of the Blackwood in question spending some years in prison after a few stabbings, but that hardly seems likely this time around.

#### Move:

• **Distressing Damsel** - Some people just don't want to be saved...or at least not by the likes of YOU, anyway. Any attempts by the Staff to rescue or placate Bagatha are made with a -1 penalty to any necessary rolls.



**Trouble:** She has taken to obvious and rather uncomfortable attempts to coincidentally catch the eye of any of the Players, undeterred by her lack of appeal and their lack of interest.

**Normal:** Bagatha has clumsily modified the neckline of her daytime dress with a pair of shears. There shall surely be consequences if His Lordship sees this (and it's going to be the devil to repair).

- Level 1 Oh heavens. Bagatha has found herself stuck on a high ladder backstage and has seemingly forgotten how to get herself down.
- Level 2 (Sigh.) Oh horrors. Bagatha has developed a noticeable and secondhandedly embarrassing habit of tripping whenever she is in the same room as any of the actors.
- Level 3 (Groan.) Oh bother. While reading on the balcony overlooking the amphitheatre lawn, Bagatha has somehow found herself precariously dangling from the railing. If she isn't caught or pulled inside her untimely funeral will put a bit of a damper on opening night.

**Result:** (Gasp!) Oh my! So she has read the histories after all. Bagatha has taken the decorative jewel handled letter-opener from the study and burst into the rehearsal space in hysterical tears, threatening to take her own life or someone else's in order to put an end to what she poetically describes as "the unbearable lusty hellfire of her secret passions."

#### Ruprick Blackwood (Oldest son)

Quote: "Oh my. That shouldn't be there at all."

**Description:** Ruprick is heir to the House and title. Lord Blackwood has decided that the troupe's residency is the perfect opportunity for his eldest son to learn an artistic skill, and as such Ruprick has been apprenticed to the Perfervid Players for the duration of their stay.

#### Move:

• Turn of the Screw - Ruprick has a preternatural ability for determining exactly which unnoticeable components of a construction can be removed to cause complete instability, turning elaborate sets or stage pieces into pending death traps by the omission or alteration of even a single screw or nail.

**Trouble:** While he takes no interest at all in acting, Ruprick has developed a rather keen and unsettling fascination with the props and scenery, frequently shadowing the stagehands and lending his involvement in the construction (and deconstruction) process.

**Normal:** Ruprick is lingering around the area of the lawn where the stagehands are hard at work constructing a scaffolding. He watches, silently.

- Level 1 Several of the larger set pieces have a decidedly unstable air about them, from wobbling doorways, to creaky scaffolding, to a guillotine you are entirely certain was never meant to be functional. These always seem to be accompanied by the uncomfortable coincidence of stray nails or hinges found littered just underneath, frequently bent at odd angles or with wood fibers still embedded.
- Level 2 The Staff keeps, shall we say, "discovering" a number of odds and ends laying around in carelessly dangerous places: long nails in the tall grass, sharp screws in the audience seats, heavy hammers balanced precariously over door frames, etc.
- Level 3 The chief carpenter has come down with a nasty case of food poisoning just before the final technical run, leaving Ruprick dubiously responsible for finishing up the bulk of the set construction. Perfectly normal. People mistakenly swallow hot lead all the time.



**Result:** At a critical moment in the final dress rehearsal, where nearly every member of the cast (including Lady Blackwood and several of the costumed Staff) are onstage, there is a tremendous creaking of strained wood and bowing steel. Regrettably, it seems to be coming from the set. All of it. Rather unavoidably. Though some prefer death to opening night jitters, the body count will be fairly alarming if something isn't done.

# The Perfervid Players

The Perfervid Players are in the process of preparing a production called of *The Monarch in Marigold*, a treatment of an archaic manuscript. They are consumate professionals in the theatre, meaning of course they are ready to fall apart at a moment's notice.

#### Sir Cortland Pennyroyal

Quote: "Stand back, I'm about to begin...ACTING!"

**Description:** A self-described playwright of considerable self-described renown, Sir Cortland Pennyroyal has written for kings and libertines alike. He is the genius behind the Perfervid Players' current project, a modern adaptation of an archaic text called "The Monarch in Marigold", previously adopted by Prussian playwright Sturmond Drang before he stabbed seventeen people to death with a fountain pen.

**Trouble:** A habitual plagiarist, Pennyroyal is paranoid and fearful of any other printed materials for fear of someone recognizing passages he has stolen. As a result he will go to great and absurd lengths to hide, destroy, or obfuscate written texts of any form.

**Normal:** All of the books in the guest suite Sir Pennyroyal is occupying now have conspicuously torn pages or have gone missing entirely.

- Level 1 An unfortunate ink spill resulting from a frenzy of inspiration on Sir Pennyroyal's part seems to have rendered several precious family texts nigh-unreadable. What exactly were those doing next to his desk again?
- Level 2 Sir Pennyroyal borrowed a stack of twenty books from the family library for light reading, all of which have somehow ended up in a full basin of bathwater.
- Level 3 Every single recipe card, book, or scrap of writing in the kitchen, including the Housekeeper's budgetary receipts, has vanished without a trace, and the oven is full of a fine ash.

**Result:** A last-minute revision to the third act has included a new, rather lengthy scene which recreates in alarming familiarity a scenario which occurred amongst the Staff just last night. Obviously some situations are widely relatable to anyone who has known the troubles of domestic life, but the dialogue here echoes certain private sentiments verbatim. The sort of private sentiments that the Family, or even quite possibly the law, would find quite troubling. It would be best for everyone involved if this did not make it to the final performance.



#### **Prentyss Pennery-Kensington**

Quote: "I so don't want to raise a fuss, but would you have any raisin toast with the raisins removed?"

**Description:** Dashing, charismatic, and roguish in a homespun-yet-inoffensively-gauche sort of way, Prentyss is the talented leading man of the Perfervid Players. Having been orphaned at a young age and raised entirely by the theatre, he is dangerously charming and somewhat divorced from the reality of consequence.

#### Move:

• Center of Attention - Prentyss is impossible to ignore. Or at the very least, he does not suffer disinterest lightly. Whenever he is present in a scene, he will go to absurd lengths to remain at the center of it, whether that entails a shocking display of seduction, an unexpected crescendo in his speaking voice, or a sudden impassioned appeal to emotion.

**Trouble:** Prentyss is insistent that he simply doesn't take well to a life of luxury, being a man of humble breeding. As such, he goes to great lengths to make his "plain tastes and simple needs" known, frequently at great cost or inconvenience to the Staff.

**Normal:** Prentyss is spending his free time associating with the Staff, on the premise that the company of more common stock is preferable to the aristocracy. He is a prolific storyteller, and is making it nearly impossible to complete tasks in a timely manner.

- Level 1 After his first night in the manor, Prentyss is overheard making veiled commentary about the quality of his sleep and how a man of simple fiber can't possibly expect to get a good night's rest on such indulgent bedding. Lady Daffodil is insistent that the Staff adjust his lodgings to his taste forthwith.
- Level 2 At the next meal, Prentyss makes a request for "something a bit less extravagant" well after preparations have all been completed, causing the Cook and possibly other Staff to scramble last minute to prepare an entirely different offering for their particular guest.
- Level 3 Claiming it is impossible to work surrounded by such opulence, Prentyss has implied that the only way he can possibly prepare adequately for the production is if all of the furniture in the parlor is relocated elsewhere prior to his next rehearsal with Lady Blackwood.

**Result:** So much time has been spent attending to the needs of Master Pennery-Kensington that the Staff are woefully unprepared for their daily tasks. They're going to have to work twice as hard to catch up to their normal responsibilities on top of all the other expectations the production requires of them.

#### **Ophelia Feverfew**

Quote: "As foretold in the prophecy, yes I'd like another cup of tea."

**Description:** Ophelia is a woman best described in nearly every aspect as unfortunate. Her pallor is just a shade too porcelain, her tremble ever-so-slightly too pronounced. Clever and quiet, she is the dramaturg for the Perfervid Players, and therefore can frequently be found studying the text of the play, murmuring lines to herself under her breath. She is quick and nervous in her movements, and it is unclear if she sleeps.

**Trouble:** Ophelia has developed something of an obsessive relationship with the text of *The Monarch in Marigold*, never letting the manuscript leave her sight or going for long without flipping through its pages. It appears to be taking an unusual toll on her constitution.

**Normal:** Ophelia is sitting in front of the stage with her face buried deep in the pages. She never looks up, but calls cues immediately the instant any of the actors falter. Or perhaps...even just before?

- Level 1 Ophelia has begun to display a rather curious habit involving occasionally sitting bolt upright and shouting strings of unsettling words for no reason. She seems to have no recollection of these spells, and is visibly frightened and upset by the mention of them. And have her eyes always been such a strange shade of amber?
- Level 2 Ophelia refuses to let anyone else touch or even look upon the manuscript. She has begun scrawling cryptic messages on the walls of the common spaces and the amphitheatre, involving the forbbiden city of Panravana. Some of them appear to be lines from the play, with certain words marked out. Let's hope that's mud she's using and not something less...salubrious.
- Level 3 Ophelia has tried and failed to destroy the manuscript, which reappeared on her bed the next morning. She seems very nearly on the brink of an irreversible mental break. All of the windows in her room have been covered and the furniture has been thrown around in a manner that implies strength and violence seemingly impossible for the meek young woman. A crude crown has been carved into the floorboards, and if you didn't know better you'd swear it was done by fingernails. But you do know better. Your composure demands it.

**Result:** The insignificant mortal known as Ophelia Feverfew is no more. Now there is only chaos, beyond and within, scratching at the walls of her frayed human form, desperately seeking purchase into the physical realm where havoc may rule. THE MONARCH COMETH.

# The Delicate Issue of The Monarch In Marigold

The subject material is bizarre and at times troubling, and requires a cast much larger than the somewhat limited troupe membership. As a result, it is quite likely the staff and family members will be called upon to fill in ancillary roles, and in the process learn something of the nature of the show and the players within it as its development progresses. There are several options regarding disturbing details they might discover or come to suspect:

#### **Options**

- The troupe is actually a band of notorious criminals, whose proficiency in the art of performance and disguise keep them one step ahead of law enforcement at all times, and who will do anything to maintain that lead. The show features a number of grisly crimes which you may assume are loosely confessional in nature. Additionally, more than one of the servants in the play meet an untimely end for "knowing too much." It is certainly only a coincidence that their names and mannerisms are so similar in construction to the names of the real household staff.
- The troupe is a collective of Bolshevik revolutionaries who despise the aristocracy and take on private engagements as a means to get close enough to sabotage the detested landed gentry they so oppose. The play includes a number of radical and thinly veiled parables about the evils of wealth and privilege.
- The troupe is a fraudulent assortment of vagrant nobodies who were simply mistaken by Her Ladyship for a theatrical entourage, and have been haphazardly inventing their personas and the show itself as they go along. Several of the vignettes within the show are so erroneously constructed they very coincidentally mimic the absurdist style so popular with intellectual society these days.



# An Awful Addition to the Household

The House is fairly horrid as it is, however the following additional locations will make the overall narrative even worse, so feel free to include them where you see fit.

#### The Abhorrent Amphitheatre

**Description:** The Perfervid Players have set their sights upon performing their glorious commission ("The Monarch in Marigold") in the old amphitheatre at the muddiest corner of the estate grounds. Historically and lavishly built to please one particularly histrionic Lady Blackwood, it was summarily abandoned following her scandalous elopement with (of all things) a dramatic baritone. It features an audience space with many arched rows of stone seats and a slightly sunken stage with an elaborate three-story back wall and partial roof.

#### **Options:**

- One Nasty Option If it is not properly mucked out every 12 hours, the aisles slowly fill with a rancid grey mud, the smell of which causes moderate nausea and a terrible rash.
- Another Unpleasant Option The back wall of the amphitheatre is carved and moulded with elaborate scenes and abstract patterns. At least, one must suppose they are intended to be abstract, otherwise one must reckon with what is very clearly an unnatural act with a plucked pheasant, a Roman senator, and a bassoon.
- Yet Another Unseemly Option The ground between the rows and around the stage is terribly uneven and historically has given rise to numerous twisted ankles, sprained arches, banged-up knees, and splinted shins. Miraculously, it has never once resulted in a broken leg, though the same cannot be said for tea sets.

**Strange Detail for No Apparent Reason:** While largely acoustically sound, some marvel of engineering has led to a bizarre echo from certain sections of the audience that causes even whispered chatter to become deafening to other spots in the amphitheatre, including center stage.

# The Terrible Conclusion

By now, the players have probably had unsettling situations surrounding the Perfervid Players and their tumultuous production, The Monarch in Marigold. Now's the time to wrap things up with a dramatic culmination that involves the players in a terrible opening night finale, with multiple options for its climax:

#### A Shocking Act of Premeditated Malice

The final act of the play includes a murder scene which, it becomes clear, the Players intend to carry out in a truly authentic manner.

One Nasty Option - A costumed Lady Blackwood is mere moments from execution when she invokes a
time-honored theatrical tradition wherein the members of the personal staff may improvise a performance in
petition for her life. They will succeed in the challenge only if they can move the executioner to tears through
recitation and interpretive dance.

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- Another Unpleasant Option The murder is the final step in summoning a horrific creature from beyond the veil, a creature known as The Marigold Monarch who seeks to ravage the undeserving world. Bagatha's blood, being virginal, is preferred, but any sacrifice will do.
- Yet Another Unseemly Option The murder is to be carried out by a staff member who is innocently unaware their prop weapon has been switched for an effective instrument of death. If they aren't stopped, the staff member will be held personally responsible for the horrific act, and their colleagues likely implicated as accomplices.

#### A Scandalous Affair of Unthinkable Matrimony

The production's finale culminates in an elaborate wedding between Prentyss Pennery-Kensington's dashing hero and the heroine played by Lady Daffodil. Due to a happenstance of exceedingly complicated circumstances and obscure legal precedents, it appears the Players intend to treat the ceremony as fully binding, albeit ever-so-slightly bigamous.

- One Nasty Option Prentyss is revealed to be a conniving and ruthless fae prince who intends to make Lady Daffodil his bride in order to ascend to the Unseelie throne. The Fairy Folk are tricky, and notoriously difficult to outsmart.
- Another Unpleasant Option As soon as the marriage ceremony is complete, Prentyss and the other Players intend to dispose of Lady Blackwood in order to amass her considerable fortune.
- Yet Another Unseemly Option Lady Blackwood is fully aware of the marriage ceremony's legitimacy, and in actuality agreed to the scheme, having grown powerfully but temporarily smitten with Prentyss over the course of their rehearsals. In order to keep their jobs and reputations in order, the Staff must help Lord Blackwood concoct a suitably elaborate romantic gesture to win her back and call off the wedding, ideally ending with the renewal of the Blackwood vows.

#### An Elaborate Heist of Considerable Magnitude

A not insignificant number of the props, costume, and budget for the show have come directly from the Blackwood treasury and assets. At some point it becomes apparent that the show is nothing more than a front for the theft of these goods, and that the Players will not be fulfilling the remainder of their residency.

- One Nasty Option Prentyss is actually a fairly well-known robber of repute among the Shirleywood commoners, infamous for his habit of charming and thieving from the rich and giving to the poor (how dreadful). Not only are they ready to rob the Family blind, but they intend to make off with Lady Blackwood at great haste. A chase through the woods was not what the Staff had planned for the evening, but sometimes arrangements must be made.
- Another Unpleasant Option Though the troupe is more than happy to make off with excess treasure, the real object they sought was a cursed artifact deep in the family treasury. Decide for yourself what the artifact in question is, and what horrific consequences it carries in the hands of the thieves.
- Yet Another Unseemly Option The entire production has been a confidence scheme orchestrated by Sir Pennyroyal, a former associate of Lord Blackwood. After being betrayed in a high-stakes business deal, Pennyroyal dedicated the ensuing decades to plotting the Lord's downfall. Notion and his entourage have thought of every possible obstacle, but he has an especial weakness for wagers...if the players can tempt him with one large enough for the chance to win back the Blackwood fortune and save face.



# The Monarch in Marigold, Act I

The following transcription is known to be the first act of "The Monarch in Marigold", originally written by Prussian playwright Sturmond Drang. Although the entirety of its seventy-two acts have been lost, due to tragic events that have surrounded its performance, many variations of the complete text have been speculated to be genuine. Some of these variations have included singing interludes that ended in horrible screeching, choregraphed ballet that is reported to have inspired instantaneous amputations of the dancers' feet and even one rendition includes an interpretative dance that requires regurgitating a small duck. However, all of these variations have maintained a consistent first act, which we have included here. When members of Staff are required to perform the play with members of the theatrical group or with Lady Blackwood hereself, feel free to use the following as the play's text.

(THE WET PERSON enters, standing before the closed curtain with a vase of dead flowers.)

#### The Wet Person:

From distance waters do we walk upon blistered sands, yet no gods follow such blasphemed steps. We who follow do make merry time in our final journeys to Panravana, the city that none shall find.

(Throws flower to the ground)

Panravana! Upon no map, nor stone or tree. Our eyes are blind, our fingers bleed.

(Throws flower to the ground)

Panravana! Cast us to the winds, and let us tremble like broken birds that sing no songs.

(Throws flower to the ground)

Panravana! There are no wounds that slow our haste. There is no waking from our troubled dreams.

(While pouring remaining water from the vase upon head)

You are ours. And we are theirs. And they are them. And you are too. Consider this.

(Wet Person leaves. Curtains open to darkness as candles are lit by CLINOMIA and MAGPUS, servants to the Monarch of Qwatr'h. As the light grows, we see two couches alongside a table with a jug of wine upon it.)

#### Clinomia:

It is dark now.

#### Magpus:

Yes, there is no light.

#### Clinomia:

For all my days have I served in Qwatr'h. Hand and foot upon royal blood. Once in younger days, I did dream of lily fields and majestic skies, but they be children's dreams. Quicksilver upon the belly of my life, never to be see once more. And yet, I do remain humble and steadfast as my bones grow tired and my sinews ache.

#### Magpus:

You talk too much.

(Clinomia strikes Magpus)

#### Clinomia:

There now, old cock! I punctuate my words with a fist and a blow!

#### Magpus:

Aiee! Strike upon me if you will! I serve my master and do so in my intent! If we do not prepare for his ascent, thy strike shall be like gentle kisses from a newborn's lips in comparison to his mighty wrath!

#### Clinomia:

I forgive your impudence, wretch. But only for the lateness of the hour. To prepare for our lord and master in solitude is not to my liking. We await the Monarch, befouled in majestic trappings. Bejeweled in wretched splendor.

#### Magpus:

With sugarspun mackle-mucks and wine-stained beastie-lings. But soft! Do you hear? The melody that grows closer in approach, unnatural and yet familiar in its refrain.

(Soft chime music begins, repeating and growing louder)

#### Clinomia:

Its remembrance haunts my unfocused thoughts. Like the fragments of a lost dream remembered for but a brief moment, found and quickly forgotten.

#### Magpus:

(drawing sword) Who doth approach, be you friend or foe?

(Music stops. Enter THE ORGAN GRINDER, carrying organ box on a pole)

#### Grinder:

I be neither, but I am known.



#### Clinomia:

How do we know thee, stranger? Your face is in shadow and your form is hidden. By what are you known?

#### Grinder:

From my melody.

#### Clinomia:

Twas you? Now I do see. You bring forth the music which we did hear. A melodious foreshadowing that charms the breast.

#### Grinder:

I am the music, yes.

#### Magpus:

Then we greet thee welcome and entreat you to stay for a moment. For we prepare the advent of our lord and king. He who presides above this kingdom of Qwatr'h.

#### Clinomia:

Would I take your musicbox, master musician?

#### Grinder:

The music is a part of me. It will not be separated from my grasp.

#### Clinomia:

A servant to one's muse. Like Orpheus as he sang to Eurydice, calling forth into the great abyss with sorrow and regret.

#### Grinder:

A servant, yes.

#### Magpus:

We do serve the royal throne as well. Bled and borne to our monarch and master.

#### Grinder:

And yet, do not all men bleed with equal crimson and marrow? The bloody cut can adorn all men's necks, no matter the head that wears the adorned crown.

#### Magpus:

You speak treasonous inclination, my sirrah!

#### Grinder:

I mean no offense to thee, I merely intend reverence to that which holds dominion upon us all. That being Thanatos and his scything blade.



#### Clinomia:

Good gentles, let us not quarrel of the nature of mortal coils. Our time is short both upon this earth and upon this day. We have much to be done. Magpus, do fetch our master's goblets from the pantry. And you my lord, would you wish to stay? Surely your music would soothe our troubled lord's brow like a cooling balm for the mind.

#### Grinder:

For thee, I stay.

(Distant cannonfire echoes in background)

#### Magpus:

The enemy grows closer. Soon we shall be overrun.

#### Clinomia:

What gives you such certainty?

#### Magpus:

Smoke and gunfire. The echoing footsteps of Death approach. The steely cannons are but the trotting of a pale horse in flight. Although we remain steadfast, we hasten to the grave.

#### Clinomia:

Pitious attempts to avoid one's charge! Even the grasp of mortality requires a straightened cloth upon the table!

#### Magpus:

Tis sobering music, my lady.

#### Grinder:

Sobering music, indeed.

#### Clinomia:

Fair minstrel, do not encourage his moral lacking. If it were to be a winter's day, he would be crying for the absence of sunlight. If it were summer, he would be moan the heat.

#### Magpus:

I speak my thoughts.

#### Clinomia:

You speak your sloth.

#### Grinder:

A curious melody, the approach of death. It is played upon many things, in different times. Some hear its melody in haste, some in slow rhythm. It is different for every man, woman and child. And yet, no matter the variation, it ends exactly the same. In silence.



(Clinomia and Magpus stare silently at the Grinder as cannonfire is hear in distance.)

#### Magpus:

Well, that's charming.

#### Clinomia:

Come, slowfoot. Our master comes soon. We must prepare for his arrival with wine and savories.

#### Magpus:

Lead, I follow.

#### Clinomia:

Do stay, minstrel. Our king should prove a kind audience for your melodies, and reward thee appropriate.

(Clinomia and Magpus exit.)

#### Grinder:

And now the overture concludes, a refrain unfamiliar and yet known. Your master shall hear my melody, and my master shall dance before you all. No man, no child shall be deafened to these songs. "Death end." Perhaps. The sun grows crimson with the haze and fog of gunfire and blood, setting unto an uneasy horizon. My song will be heard, the bells shall ring. The echos shall remain as an unseen witness to what will transpire. Night falls upon this land of Qwatr'h. Night falls upon us all.

(Cannonfire is heard once again, with lights out)

END OF ACT I

