

BESTIA: THE HUNTERS

**A SOURCEBOOK FOR DREAD:
THE FIRST BOOK OF PANDEMONIUM**



**Written by Rafael Chandler
Illustrated by Heather Chandler
and Rafael Chandler**

www.malignantgames.com

INTRODUCTION: LADIES' NIGHT OUT

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"Let no emotions of the flesh, be they of pain or pleasure, affect the supreme and sovereign portion of the soul. See that it never becomes involved with them: it must limit itself to its own domain, and keep the feelings confined to their proper sphere."

-- Marcus Aurelius

After the fiasco with Dr. Proctor, Slashfic and Hush were confined to their beds while their wounds healed. During those (blessedly quiet) weeks, Morlock and I went to war. In Durham, we crushed a gibbering Dengiorre demon under the wheels of a Chevy S-10. In Apex, we faced off in a cornfield against a pair of obsidian-skinned Vuiloma demons. In Cary, we exorcised a Lunamic from the body of a terrified real estate agent.

When Angelica returned from abroad, she presented us with a new face: Minx, a slender woman with almond-shaped green eyes, short black hair, and strong shoulders. Minx had two areas of expertise: firearms and confidence schemes. Morlock and I found use for her talents at once. We were stalking a strain of demon which we hadn't dealt with before: the Scabresse demon. There were four dead teenagers in the Triangle's downtown areas, and there were murmurs of a serial killer. We knew better, but were having a hard time getting through to the runaways and young junkies.

"Fuck a bunch of that," Minx said, cocking her hips. She crossed her arms, leaned against the brick. It was late, and smelled like night in the city. Cigarette smoke, exhaust, coffee, urine.

The boy, barely fifteen by the look of him, picked at the dark purple tracks on his arm and shook his head. He was sitting in a cardboard box, wrapped in crumpled newspapers.

"If you're a cop, you have to tell me." He looked up at Minx, then looked away.

Minx snorted, disgusted. "Look, Ricardo--"

"It's Enrique," he said mildly. He stopped picking at his tracks.

"Yeah, whatever, suck me." She leaned forward and grinned in his face. He recoiled slightly, the back of his tall blonde mohawk grazing the back of his cardboard shelter. "I'm not here to break your balls, I just want to know who was the last person to see Jennie Metcalf alive. You want to dick around all day, fine, but I'm not leaving until you tell me. And if I was a cop, I'd tell you. I'd tell you shut the hell up. And I'd tell you to eat a box of Altoids with your stank-ass breath."



In spite of himself, Enrique smiled. We were in an alley behind LeFanu's, and the throbbing bass from inside the club reverberated along the concrete, rattling empty bottles and cans. Enrique lived behind the club, a pierced and penniless derelict. His accommodations were surprisingly comfortable, from the look of things: he toted a compact CD player with headphones, and drank Rolling Rock from a green glass bottle. Minx and I were trying to pose as street people. She looked convincing: her hair was short and dark, and she looked good with too much make-up and a torn t-shirt. She looked like the kind of girl that could pick up a good-looking boy at a bar without even trying. I looked awful, and I'm not going to describe what I wore. I know that I looked like a little girl pretending to be a prostitute. I kept rubbing my mouth nervously, and later I learned -- to my infinite dismay -- that I'd smeared lipstick all over my chin and upper lip. Enrique must have decided that I was Minx's ugly friend, enlisted to catch the attention of unattractive men in bars.

Enrique thought for a while, during which time Minx lit up yet another clove cigarette and checked one of her watches. She wore three. She'd been bare-armed when we left the house, but now sported three watches on her slender wrist, and a pair of bracelets on the other arm.

"Okay," she said, exhaling through her nose. "Give us something. We need to catch this guy."

"So you are cops," he said, smugly.

She flicked her cigarette into the darkness. "I think I'm going to beat the crap out of you in about a minute if you don't give me something."

She crossed her arms again, and the flickering light from the sodium lamps delineated her rock-hard arm muscles. Enrique swallowed, then brushed lint from his sweater in an oddly poignant gesture of futility -- the grime covered him from head to toe.

"Okay," he said, nodding. "Jimmy Canonizado said that he was being followed, that some guy was going to kill him. He said it was a ghost, but Jimmy's kind of on smack these days, so that maybe doesn't mean a lot."

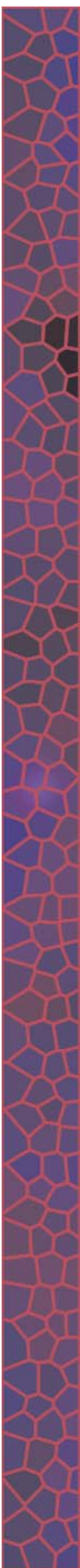
He cocked his head sideways and looked up at Minx. She stared back at him for a while, then arched a single eyebrow. Enrique shrugged.

"So Jimmy's living at the Fellowship on Martin Street, but you're supposed to be clean if you live there, and while Jimmy was staying there, they found some needles and shit."

Minx nodded, then looked at me. "Scabresse," she said. She'd been insisting that it was a Scabresse all night, though I'd yet to disagree with her.

Enrique sucked on a tooth. "So," he said, "You guys think maybe that was worth something?"

Minx nodded and bent down. She placed a five-dollar bill in his hand, then put one hand on each side of his face.



"You get it together," she said quietly. "Get your head together or they're going to have an ugly little black-and-white picture of you in the paper one day. And no one will even remember your name."

The second part, she intoned like a mantra that she'd spoken more than once. I shivered and looked around. In the shadows at the end of the alley, I imagined that I could see a pair of black eyes, blinking in the dark, aimed towards me like the twin barrels of a shotgun.

I know that my life will end in pain, and soon. On certain nights, I can feel it like a hand closing around my wrist, a strong cold hand that begins to drag me along inexorably. There are times when I feel that I am being shoved from behind, propelled by some monstrous force, like the power that builds up in my gut when I travel by air, that heavy sensation in the stomach that accompanies propulsion at great speeds. It seems that a few days ago, I was fourteen and happy. Then, a mere week or two later, I awoke and found myself in my mid-twenties. I spend every day of my life hoping to survive another few hours. A sort of equanimity has come over me lately, and through the writings of the Stoics, I have come to accept my fate. Heraclitus indicated that one's fate is one's character. I hope that I do not scream when my end comes.

Enrique did not understand Minx, or what she was trying to accomplish. He was too busy trying to find the kind of equanimity that I discovered among the writings of a dead emperor. His concern was breakfast, not the spectral marauders that feed upon us in the small hours of the night.

Minx was able to extract information from the lonely priest who ran the Fellowship, and we were able to locate Jimmy Canonizado. We were able to save him, in the short term. Morlock and I set a trap, using Minx as the bait. We were beaten severely (my left clavicle was broken for the sixth time), but we immobilized the demon long enough for Morlock to dismember it with a chainsaw.

Jimmy Canonizado did not die at the hands of the Scabresse. We saved his life. But while reading the paper yesterday, I learned that he had overdosed. I clipped his ugly little black-and-white picture for my scrapbook. Enrique never told us his last name, and I have not learned anything of his life or death. I hope that he is well, and that he is eating properly. I know that he is neither.

I cannot help but wonder what Hush or Slashfic might tell me at this time. I imagine Slashfic's casual stream of profanity and invective (he will find Minx to be a delight, I am certain), and I can almost hear Hush try to explain terms in his simple, accidentally poetic way, but it seems to me that Morlock's sullen silence explains the madness best. There are no answers, no explanations for our drive to defile ourselves, to crush the light within one another, to drag the shadow and grime over ourselves like blankets.

Sometimes, it is difficult to believe that the supreme and sovereign portion of my soul even exists. It seems more likely that I have found my own confidence scheme, a way to trick myself into contentment and serenity.

If only it worked once in a while, I would not complain as loudly.

SHURULL DEMON



Statistics:

Body: 6

Mind: 3

Spirit: 6

Damage: 3

Imprecations:

Iurua

Shurull Demon

A sadistic tormentor, the Shurull demon places control of its victim's life in the hands of the victim's worst enemy, bringing a bloody closure to their conflict, and destroying one life while corrupting another.

When a gangster turns on his partner, or an abusive husband crosses the line with his wife, or a chronically absent father misses his young son's moment of glory yet again, the Shurull is there to offer a kind of satisfaction. Abducting the guilty party, and binding him hand and foot, the Shurull then presents itself to the aggrieved individual in the guise of an angelic creature. Wings, halo, and golden light are wrapped around the demon as it explains that it has come to punish the wicked. Its mesmerized victim is then offered a choice: liberate the tormentor or inflict pain.

If the injured person (the neglected child, the betrayed partner, the battered wife) finds it possible to offer forgiveness, the Shurull kills both persons in disgust and starts all over again. However, if the injured person seeks revenge, the Shurull displays a maniacal patience, and a wicked understanding of human anatomy. Over a great span of time, it will torture its incapacitated victim (the double-crossing criminal, the violent spouse), bringing him back from the brink time and again. The Shurull will begin to solicit feedback and suggestions from the other person, asking for advice on technique and method. Before long, the demon will be able to retreat to the sidelines, content to watch as one flays the other alive.

Needless to say, the Shurull is happiest when one kills the other in an excess of zeal. At this juncture, the demon will divest itself of the angelic disguise, and will reveal its true face. A spiny red fiend, the Shurull will then wish the duped murderer good luck, and will maim the person in some way before leaving -- a gouged eye, an amputated hand or foot. The wound will prove too agonizing to tend alone, and will generally drive its victim to seek medical attention. Carefully, the Shurull will follow, and will place some keepsake from the deceased's person on the pillow of the convalescing victim in the hospital. Soon enough, the authorities will discover the mangled remains (in the woods, in a basement, in the desert), and will descent upon the hospital to take the murderer into custody. Then the demon begins anew.

Violent and cruel, the Shurull will often focus on a single person if attacked by a group, and will seek to wound that person as brutally as possible. If cornered, it will unleash a wave of blackness with the Imprecation of Iurua.

SCABRESSE DEMON

CLUB CASPARUS, 2.14.03:

THE MUSIC OF:
DJ SPANIARD
BLOOD CAUL
GNAWFISH
VELLOCINATE
PHTHISIS
DARQUE-EYES
and special guests
STAND BY ME

CLUB CASPARUS
216 ICTHYS DRIVE

DOORS OPEN AT 8PM
MUST BE 18 OR OLDER



Statistics:

Body: 5

Mind: 5

Spirit: 6

Damage: 4

Imprecations:

Piaskh

Scabresse Demon

The Scabresse preys on the young homeless. Destitute runaways, teenage prostitutes, and aimless high school dropouts are its meat and milk. From the shadows, this demon stalks its hapless prey, most of whom never even suspect its presence.

Upon selecting a target, the Scabresse patiently begins to hunt its quarry. The demon feeds on the misery, sickness, and desolation of its victims, and for weeks, the field will seek to exacerbate these by any means possible. To this end, the Scabresse will destroy anyone who tries to make life easier for its victim. Helpful friends, concerned teachers, motivated policemen, and caring social workers will be removed from contact with the demon's intended prey. However, the Scabresse is not content to merely kill those who interfere with its sport. It is driven to utterly humiliate and defile them, as punishment for their interloping. Thus, it will strive to discredit them, and to ruin their lives. By planting drugs or illegal pornography in their homes or vehicles, and then summoning the authorities, the demon causes them to fall from grace in the eyes of its victims. It also provides a convincing explanation for the suicide that invariably follows. After the positive influence is removed from its young victims, the Scabress visits the teacher or guidance counselor in prison, and carefully makes the murder look like a guilty suicide. It is careful, and strikes at night, so the demon is rarely caught at this stage.

This disturbing revelation about a positive older figure only serves to aggravate the young runaway's feelings of isolation and betrayal, which are a delicacy for the Scabresse. One by one, the victim's allies and loved ones are discredited and removed from the picture, until the prey is completely alone. At this point, the Scabresse emerges from the shadows and reveals itself to its victim. It typically taunts its prey, promising a horrific death in a matter of days. It then returns to the shadows and vanishes from sight. For days, its hounds its prey, deriving malicious glee from the panic and desperation. If the victim finds refuge in a home or religious sanctuary, the demon leaves syringes or weapons in easily discovered hiding places, and waits for its victim to be expelled by the fearful or exasperated Samaritans. If this does not work, the Scabresse destroys its victim's protectors outright.

When the game has lost its appeal, the demon incapacitates its victim and devours him alive, feet first.

Wiry and translucent, the Scabresse moves without sound and speaks only to its victim. Though not truly invisible, the demon usually goes undetected by humans standing mere yards away from it. A mediocre fighter, the Scabresse is accustomed to fighting weakened, terrified teenagers, and will frequently underestimate older, stronger opponents. It is prone to overconfidence, and will rarely flee or retreat.

The demon's Imprecation, Piaskh, manifests itself as a vast black scythe which slices through the air towards its victims. The scythe is accompanied by great billowing clouds of dark green smoke which reek of vomit and urine.

