

EB1



# The Blight

Richard Pett's Crooked City

## EB1: The Crooked Nail



Brandon Hodge



FROG GOD  
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# The Blight

Richard Pett's Crooked City

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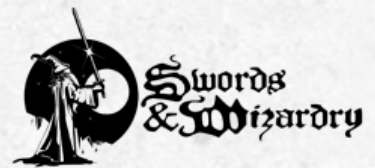


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# The Blight

Richard Pett's Crooked City

## CB1: The Crooked Nail

By Brandon Hodge



*“... You’ve just entered the wrong side of town ...”*

*The Crooked Nail* is a *Swords & Wizardry* adventure designed for a party of four to six 1st-level PCs. It serves as a companion adventure to Richard’s Pett’s *The Blight* and takes place in that twisted city as revealed in the campaign setting published by **Frog God Games**.

# Introduction

Dark are the deeds that occur unseen in the blighted streets and alleys of Castorhage. When the moons are high and the vaporous Canker shrouds the cobbles, or even behind closed doors and shuttered windows during the hours of wan daylight, black-eyed practitioners of the foulest sort ply their trade. The powerful among the city's elite think that they plumb the deepest esoteric secrets and command the darkest rituals, but in a city the size of the Blight, countless others would tap into forbidden knowledge and are willing to risk all in their own bid to rise among the mighty — even if that risk is to the city itself.

## Warning

This adventure contains mature themes that may not be suitable for some readers or players. Our purpose at **Frog God Games** is not to make tasteless or offensive products. But we do intend to make thrilling adventures in the style of old-school game play that test the players' stalwartness and bring difficult and layered nuances to their game. Simulating and navigating the struggles of real life (and/or their fantasy equivalent) with exceptional powers and skills as characters while freeing players of the prospect of actual consequences is one of the great draws of roleplaying games, and we always strive to create that experience in our products.

## Adventure Background

Decades ago, a malevolent and mysterious fraternal society rose to prominence in the Artists' Quarter of Castorhage. This order — the *Fraternitatem Æternam* — was a dangerous mixture of esoteric college, secret society, and pyramid scheme. Whispered rumors told of profane rites performed within the walls of the group's compound, and locals spoke of a strange ruddy glow seen in the building's high windows, and of the guttural, inhuman cries heard from behind its walls. While it existed, local streets remained abuzz with news that powerful adepts within the order had infernal powers at their disposal, and that they would eventually emerge from their lodge to become a major new power in the Blight's social hierarchies.

But then, nearly as quickly as it had begun, the strangeness grew silent, and the entrance to the fraternal lodge opened no more. Known members of the order were no longer seen in the city's streets, sauntering confidently as they had in their heavy robes embroidered with the order's mystic sigils. The curious dared not breach the lodge's doors, and even the Watch refused to investigate. And as is the way of the Blight, the disturbance was soon forgotten, swallowed by the din of the city's other intrigues.

But the memory was not erased for all. There were *survivors*. The order had indeed been in the thrall of infernal powers. Led by a powerful occultist, the fraternity used profane rituals to open rifts between worlds, gating in powerful demonic patrons to curry favor for the order's members. But many within its ranks were too concerned with glitz, glamour, and promises, and lacked experienced bartering in such profanities. Mere months after the establishment of the *Fraternitatem Æternam*, a climactic ritual meant to secure the imprisonment and patronage of a terrible general of Jubilex's army — the great ooze demon Darmathon — failed terribly, and nearly the entirety of the order's membership was sucked into the Abyssal rift, where their bodies and souls became a feast for fiends.

All but two young acolytes were condemned to the Abyss that day, and it is fortunate that the order entrusted their acolytes with protective

measures against such a mishap: talismanic nails that could seal a rift for as long as they stayed in place. Pursued by demonic entities, the young acolytes Crux and Chelman managed to hammer the magical nails into each of the lodge's four corners and snapped the rift shut, trapping Darmathon between worlds in a half-summoned state.

The experience drove the acolytes to obsession. Crux fled into the Blight's occult underworld, gathering items of protection meant to ward off the demonic entities he was convinced were after him. His rival Chelman thus became the inheritor of the order's property and used his newfound wealth to confront his demons in the lodge itself. Months passed, and the diabolic graffiti that came to cover the building's façade soon took on new form, as wood-and-wire frameworks and buckets of plaster transformed the building into a strange new incarnation — a theatre and spookshow devoted to the twisted and the macabre: the *Theatre Infernalis*. Having faced and overcome his fears, Chelman had brought his demons to mechanical life! All that had transpired before became the heel of an indecent spectacle in which those who entered to satiate their curiosity were subjected to all manner of smoke-and-mirror haunts and demonic automatons overseen by a curiously obsessed host.



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For decades now, Chelman has been warden to the sealed rift, and patrons sent fleeing into the streets by his demonic spookshow have little idea of the true terror that remains confined inside its four walls. Over Chelman's lifetime, the Theatre Infernalis has passed from a popular venue among the swaggering bourgeoisie of Castorhage into a stale relic; its displays and traps are worn and threadbare, and the rite of passage that was once its main attraction is now little more than a campy, nostalgic romp for bored visitors to the Artists' Quarter.

But age and consumption have overtaken its proprietor, and as Chelman's final days draw near, so too, it seems, do those of the Theatre Infernalis. Its fate unknown, patrons old and new flock once more to the spookshow for one last thrill. Unbeknownst to the elderly occultist and his customers, however, his old rival Crux has anticipated this day and waits in the wings to ensure that the theatre's proprietorship falls to the last surviving heir of the Fraternitatem Æternam. Threatened by the impending closure, Crux has taken drastic steps to ensure that the order's surviving secrets and artifacts finally become his; steps which may unleash a powerful demon onto Castorhage's streets if left unchecked.

accusing them of burglary. Wading through his incoherence, several of the theatre's staff step in to threaten characters and get to the bottom of the host's concerns: a magical talismanic nail has been removed from a display, setting off the proprietor's predictions of doom and hellfire. Investigating, the characters find a clue to the real perpetrators — the antagonistic street gang — and are employed to recover the nail at all costs.

Seeking out the thieves, the characters are immersed in the hustle and bustle of the streets of Castorhage, and soon find the gang's hideout. Presided over by a deranged collector of occult ephemera, the characters must defeat the gang and their guardians by wit or force, recover the magical nail from among the boss's bizarre collection of relics, and return it to the Theatre Infernalis.

But in their absence, the theatre has undergone a disturbing transformation into a truly infernal landscape as the rift between reality and the Abyss reopened with the removal of the talisman. Once-innocuous automatons spring to life to attack characters, empowered by the unleashed spirits of demonic minions, while the quasit-possessed corpses of the theatre's murdered employees roam the halls to protect their new master: the awakened form of the once-hibernating Darmathon, who has emerged from the formerly dormant summoning sigil and is regaining his former power with each passing day.

## Adventure Summary

A happenstance visitation or rumor of the theatre's final days brings the character to the doorstep of the Theatre Infernalis. Stepping through the gaping, demonic mouth that makes up the theatre's doorway, the group enjoys a drink in an elaborately and infernally decorated front tavern, and wait their turn to take a trip through the theatre's signature attraction: a walk-through Abyss-themed spookhouse. The anticipation of the upcoming entertainment is spoiled briefly when a small gang of street thugs disrupts the revelry, but the party is soon escorted to the spookshow entrance by the establishment's cranky proprietor. Set free to explore the bizarre hallways lit by dim and smoking crucibles that give it a hellish appearance, the characters encounter a host of demonic automatons that spring to life to frighten and amuse, spectral haunts conjured with the clever use of smoke and mirrors, and other apparatus meant to elicit scares and cheap thrills. But the previously encountered gang members have sabotaged some of the clever gimmicks, and character may find some of the effects more harmful than expected.

Exiting the abyssal funhouse, the character find the bar silent and abandoned as the theatre's proprietor sets upon them, aggressively

## Beginning the Adventure

The adventure begins when the characters visit the Theatre Infernalis. There are a number of ways you can ensure their attendance. You may seed rumors of the strange theatre and a last chance to experience its attraction due to its impending closure, or you may simply place it in their path as they take their first wary steps into the city's filthy streets. One character or another may have fond memories of visiting the venue in their younger days, or you may have the group make a delivery to the theatre's bar or its proprietor, and have them invited to stay around for a tour. Whatever the means you use to get them there, the adventure will take care of the rest.

# Chapter One: The Theatre Infernalis

The Theatre Infernalis is located in the Artists' Quarter of Castorhage, its gaping-mouthed façade blending into the profane murals and strange sculpture of cramped streets and noisy alleys among the Theatres Sinister. Its history is now mostly faded from memory, its significance forgotten or ignored by the citizens, and its presence well outside the influence and intrigues of the incessant squabbles of the Fetch and the Triads, and beneath the notice of the manufactured chaos of the Revolutionaries. You may wish characters familiar with the Artists' Quarter to have some conception of its macabre history. Roll 1d20 and provide the characters with all information below or equal to the target number.

1d20	Result
8	The characters knows nothing more than the theatre's passé stature among dozens of competing theatres, relying on outdated if entertaining automations and veiled actors to surprise the public with a tired and threadbare spookshow.
12	The characters knows that the aging proprietor was possibly involved in some unspecified occult intrigue in the quarter before the theatre's opening.
16	The building once housed a profane arcane order that brokered in demonic forces.
18	One of the characters knows the order's proper name — the <i>Fraternitatem Æternam</i> — and knows that all known members of the order disappeared under mysterious circumstances several decades ago, just before the theatre's opening.

\* See *The Blight: Richard Pett's Crooked City* by Frog God Games for details.

## Front of House

The theatre's front of house is made up of its external façade, lobby, ticket stand, display cabinets, bar, balcony and spookshow entrance.

### A1. Façade

The façade of the Theatre Infernalis, constructed of heavy plaster over wire framing, depicts an infernal hellscape where pitchfork-wielding demons throw sinners into a craggy lake of eternal fire, and which is actually illuminated at night by hidden lanterns and burning wicks that emit faintly sulphurous fumes; locals joke in wonderment that, over its many years, the theatre has not gone up in flames as a result. The entire façade has seen better days, with its wire frame exposed in many places, and the plaster worn and eroded, though many maintain that it gets more frightening with each passing year as a result. Interrupting the façade's crumbling torment scene is a gaping, demonic face whose toothy maw frames two massive doors that swing open to reveal the lobby and tavern beyond.

Many of the individuals depicted burning among the crags and waves were once well-known personages in the city against whom the proprietor

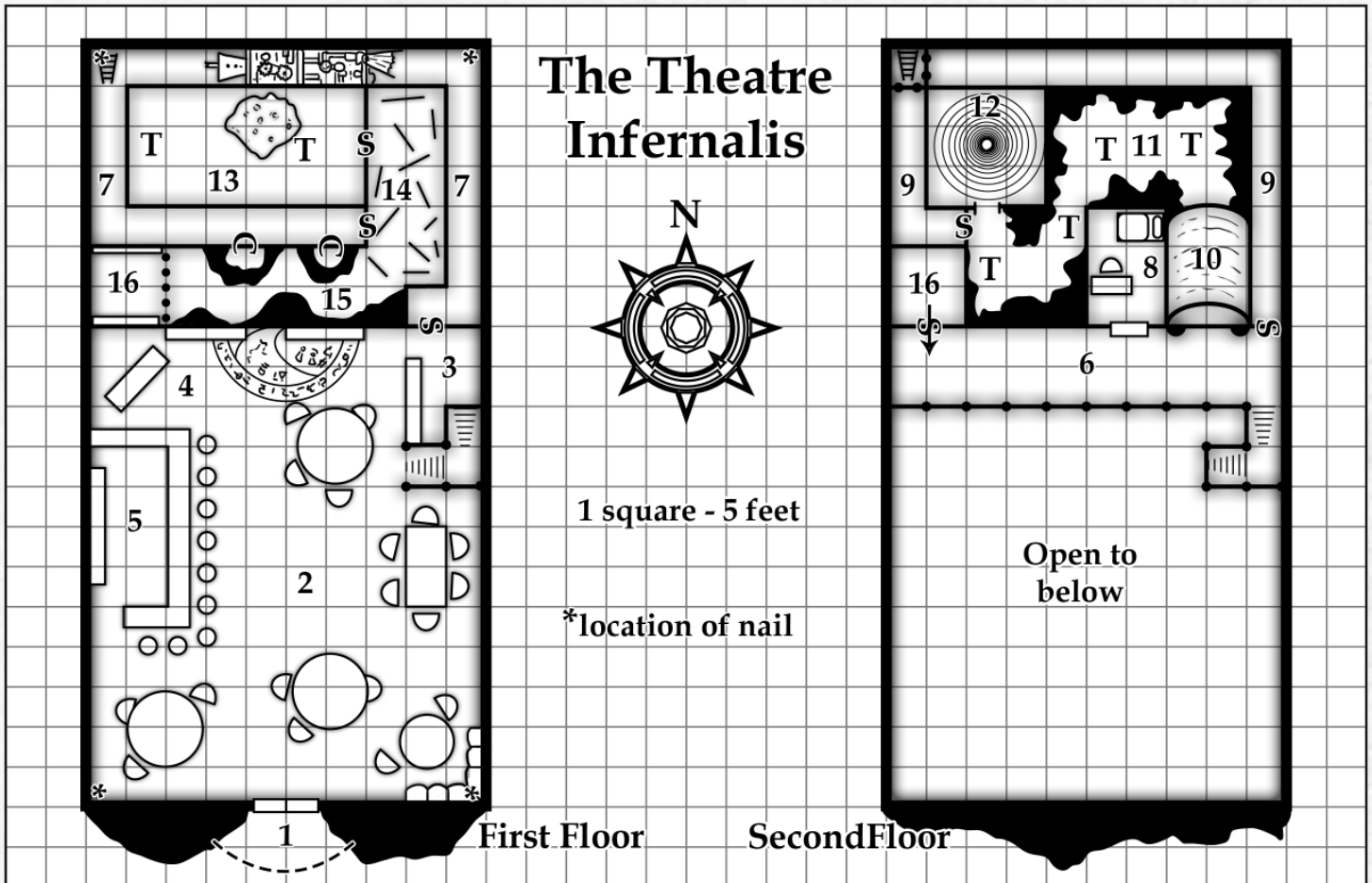


had some grudge or another. Most are now dead or unrecognizable, though some particular family traits might be picked out from among the faces.

### A2. Lobby

The lobby is decorated in heavy plaster that makes it appear as if patrons have stepped into a giant, infernal cave. Flames dance from burning crucibles that flare up unexpectedly, and demonic faces occasionally spring forth from hidden recesses to startle passersby. The rear of the spacious establishment holds a dimly lit, yet busy bar offset by nearby display cases stuffed with all manner of esoteric ephemera. Several strangely dressed employees tend a ticket stand below wide stairs that lead up to a looming balcony.

The lobby of the Theatre Infernalis is a masterpiece of faux-Infernal décor. The clever lighting from crucibles both hidden and exposed gives the environment a churning, broiling quality, as if immersed in hellish flames. Guided by hidden springs or thin wires, fiendishly styled mannequins and marionettes pounce forth from within the walls and tessellated floorboards, or fly through the air below the high ceiling. But after patrons witness a few of these surprising sequences, the timing of the



machinery becomes a predictable annoyance for those wishing to quietly finish their drinks. The lobby has many uncomfortable tables, scorched as if exposed to Abyssal flames, and many of the barstools and chairs are rigged with primitive electrodes that the bartender can crank to remotely move the seats or startle unruly guests, though it's rare that anyone bothers these days. For now, let characters witness these startling animations only from afar; there is more to come in the spookshow, and the lobby's surprises will be put to better purpose in **Chapter 3**.

The lobby area encompasses the ticket stand (A3), an array of esoteric display cases (A4), the bar (A5), and the looming balcony above (A6) that also contains the entrance to the infamous spookshow.

### A3. Ticket Stand

During business hours, the ticket stand is the post and refuge of the theatre's proprietor, **Chelman** (N male human MU3, 7hp). Though he once served as host in the same flamboyant manner that current host Luther now does, his advanced age has made him sullen and withdrawn, and his frailness confines him to only brief mobility with a cane. Working the ticket booth from a comfortable perch, however, allows him to interact with every patron, and he perturbingly promises eternal flames and hellish damnation to all ticket purchasers who fail to learn the lessons of the spookshow: to live a clean life free of indulgence in temptation and corruption.

Like Luther, he dresses in a high-collared and heavily adorned ceremonial robe. His tiny, stooped frame, which is swallowed up by the voluminous vestments, is almost comical in appearance.

Tickets for the spookshow are 1sp per person. These days, there is a 20-minute wait before patrons are called in groups of 4–6 to make their way up the stairs to the entrance a few minutes after the group ahead of them. A small, hinged bookshelf and numerous draped ceremonial robes on the north wall behind the ticket stand conceal a secret entrance to the service hallway (A7).

## A4. Infernal Display

Several sealed glass display cases stand along the lobby's back wall. Within, dusty old props and relics purporting to be artifacts from the Abyss rest in a museum-like exhibit. There's a vial of dark liquid labeled "River Styx," several chunks of porous rock labeled with the numbers of various layers of the Abyss, and an assortment of demonic samples, including leathery snippets of "Nabasu Wing," an enormous "Glabrezu Pincer," greasy "Nalfeshnee Pinfeathers," a withered "Vrock Spore" vine, and a jar of red "Babau Slime." Another case holds a set of mysterious relics that appear to have come from some occult order. Before an unfurled, weathered banner draped across the case's back panel are shelves piled with fancy sashes, soiled lambskin gloves, delicate silk aprons, tie-tacks, brooches, censers, and all manner of esoteric ceremonial garb, all heavily decorated with mystic symbolism.

Adjacent to the case is a complete ceremonial costume displayed on a disturbingly decaying wax mannequin. Leaning nearby on the wall is an elaborately decorated wooden coffin with a glass window containing a skeleton itself intricately engraved with glyphs and runes. Above this case, a lopsided banner adorned with the symbol of a chained book hangs from a ceremonial spear. Nearby, a rusted and broken ceremonial longsword is mounted to the wall. A third and final case holds four realistic models of tiny, fiendish-looking creatures in various macabre poses. To complete the effect, part of the stone floor here is engraved with a semicircle, inlaid with fanciful silver runes of some kind that encloses a section of the display.



While the inlaid semicircle on the floor may seem thematically appropriate and be dismissed as mere fanciful decoration, the fact is that it is one side of an old summoning circle, the diameter of which extends beyond the room's perimeter and into the Path of the Damned (A15); the spookshow's walls having been built over it. A *detect magic* reveals faint dweomers that have been constrained or subdued by outside forces or age.

The cases contain both fake and genuine occult esoterica, but the characters will not have the chance to investigate and identify some of the items more closely at this time. Opening the heavy display cases first requires unlocking their barred back-panels. The panels are impossible to access, however, unless the cases are moved away from the wall. The glass can be smashed instead, of course, but either method to access the contents draws the immediate attention of the theatre's staff, who keep their eyes trained upon the relics. Refer to area C4 in Chapter 3 for more details on the items within.

A closer examination of the rune-carved skeleton reveals that it is human. The chained book symbol on the banner belongs to an obscure and long-defunct fraternal order known as the *Fraternitatem Æternam* that is said to have been destroyed by even darker forces for meddling with things better left alone.

While the four macabre models first appear to be gaffs of exceptional quality, the bits of exposed bone and parched skin come only from real, preserved specimens. These are the desiccated corpses of quasits.

**Treasure:** In the mannequin's inside breast pocket is a small leather case containing three *scrolls of protection from evil*. The ceremonial spear is a *+1 spear*. The damaged longsword (25% chance to break if used) is enchanted via an occult ritual so that it has a *bless* spell cast upon it that immediately ends if the sword is ever used to strike a deathblow. While the magic of these items might be detected, the characters are unlikely to be able to closely examine their dweomers for identification purposes due to their being concealed or out of reach, and the watchful staff prevent anyone from handling the items.

## A5. Bar

A long bar stretches toward the back of the establishment. While the shelves bear all manner of expensive bottles and rare vintages, most of these bottles date from the establishment's better days and are now filled with water; most of the current drink service comes from a few bottles of cheap alcohol or one of the tapped kegs of ale or wine. The bartender, **Jaym** (L male human commoner, 3hp), is dressed in a black and red satin robe that gives him the appearance of a grand warlock, though it contrasts rather sharply with his broad, pockmarked face and patchy beard, both of which lend him an appearance more in keeping with a blacksmith or manufactory worker. He is a nice enough fellow who has a difficult time keeping up the sinister charade expected of him, and his boredom over the ever-diminishing crowds leads him to engage in casual conversation typically forbidden by Chelman, who is quick to interject with portents of woe from the ticket stand if he notices Jaym not playing his proper role or getting too chummy with customers.

## A6. Balcony

The spookshow takes up the majority of the theatre's space, and spans two levels. The entrance is on the upper level via a 10ft-wide balcony with a high railing that overlooks the lobby. Flanking the entrance tunnel (A10) are two doors — one obvious, the other concealed. A stout, ironbound door set into the plastered façade to the left of the spookshow entrance

## THE BLIGHT: RICHARD PETT'S CROOKED CITY

leads to Chelman's bedroom (A8). To the right of the spookshow entrance, at the northeast corner of the balcony, a secret door concealed behind the rocky façade leads into the upper service hallway (A9). At the far west end of the balcony, a wide secret door from the lift (A16) can be discovered, but it is a one-way secret door and cannot be opened from this side.

### Back of House

The theatre's back of house contains lower and upper service hallways, and a room used by Chelman as a bedroom and office. At this stage in the adventure, the characters have little reason to investigate these areas and if they stray into them, theatre staff swiftly eject them as detailed in each area.

#### A7. Lower Service Hallway

All manner of gears, levers, and bellows crowd this cramped service hallway.

This dim, lantern-lit hallway conceals the lower-floor machinery that makes the spookshow function, and is filled with pulleys, bellows, and other active devices. The accumulated machinery makes this corridor incredibly cramped and difficult to navigate, and it is considered difficult terrain as a result. The east-west stretch of the northernmost corridor is entirely blocked by heavy pneumatic machinery, and so the western and southern portions of this hallway are accessible only through the secret panel in the mirror maze (A14) or through the service chute and ladder that drops from the upper service hallway (A9).

If characters enter this area during the spookshow's operation, their presence draws the attention and ire of the theatre's mechanic, **Mattie** (N female human, 4hp), who arrives in 1d6 rounds to drive them out of the area with threats of a beating from her large wrench.

The northeast corner of the hallway is the location of one of the theatre's four *blessed nails*, which is pounded into a warped ceiling rafter, and, if actively searched for, is easily found. Another *blessed nail* is driven into the back wall of the northwest corner of the hallway, partially concealed by a rung of the service ladder.

#### A8. Bedroom and Office

This crowded and disorderly office contains a small desk and a bed piled with clothes and costumes.

Chelman has not left the sanctuary of his theatre in many years, and this room doubles as his office and bedroom. A simple bed, washbasin, and desk are the only furniture here, but the room is crowded with decades' worth of pamphlets and papers, and is festooned with religious banners and dangling holy symbols. While valuables are concealed in this room, it is also carefully watched by theatre employees. Should characters attempt to enter the room, they should get little more than a glimpse before Chelman, possibly accompanied by Jaym or Luther, interrupt their intrusion and run them off. If the characters take extraordinary measures to sneak into this room on their first trip to the spookshow, refer to the same area (C8) in **Chapter 3** for more information on what they may find within.

#### A9. Upper Service Hallway

Sputtering lanterns illuminate walls of grinding gears, pumping bellows, and other machinery in this cramped service corridor.

This hallway contains all manner of machinery necessary for the spookshow's effects. The northwest corner contains a short brass railing around an opening in the floor — a chute leading down to the lower service hallway (A7) via the brass rungs of a wall-mounted ladder. Other entrances include a secret door in the rocky façade of the balcony (A6), and a similarly built door in the spookshow's cackling caves (A11). The cramped hallway is considered difficult terrain.

Just as in the lower service hallway (A7), if characters enter this area during the spookshow's operation, their presence is detected by the theatre's no-nonsense mechanic, **Mattie**, who arrives in 1d4 rounds with a large wrench hoisted over her shoulder and a grease-stained finger pointed sternly toward the direction from which the characters entered.

### Event 1: Hood's Rats

When the characters enter the lobby, one group of patrons is ascending the stairs toward the spookshow entrance, two small groups are waiting to purchase tickets at the ticket stand, and yet another group is laughing as they are ejected from the spookshow's exit (A16) back onto the balcony. This area contains two of the four *blessed nails* that keep the old *Fraternitatem Æternam* summoning circle (that traverses **Areas A4** and **A15**) in check. Both are hammered deeply in exposed rafter beams in the southwest and southeast corners of the ceiling. The other two *blessed nails* are located in the building's opposing corners, accessible via the lower service hallway (A7). All nails require a successful Open Doors check to remove.

The establishment is quite lively, and the bar is relatively busy in its closing days. The flamboyant host, **Luther** (N male human Thf2, 5hp), greets all new arrivals. Tall and lithe with a wickedly pointed goatee, Luther has a haughty, disconcerting air and a disarming, diabolic appearance achieved by elaborate, high-collared, extravagant robes covered in esoteric symbolism, and bright red greasepaint that covers his bald head. He has long relished his role as the visible face of the theatre, and speaks in a strange foreign accent while making grand, sweeping

## THE CROOKED NAIL

gestures as he demonstrates the wonders of the establishment to new arrivals. He greets patrons with a deep and somber bow, welcoming them with a halted and bellowing, "Welcome, saints — No! Sinners! — to ... the Theatre ... INFERNALIS!"

Luther escorts all patrons through the lobby, carefully guiding them past some of the triggered effects meant to startle and amuse, and around and through the tables toward the ticket booth (A3) to purchase tickets. They are then invited to purchase drinks at the bar, inspect the Infernal display (A4), before being guided to an empty table to wait their turn for the spookshow. Luther guides the characters to the empty booth in the southeast corner of the lobby. Later, when the nail above that booth goes missing, the characters' previous proximity sparks Chelman's suspicions of them. If the characters do not take these seats, however, Hood's Rats still implicate them in the talisman's theft before their exit (see **Event 2: To Nail a Thief**).

Awaiting their turn to tour the spookshow is a small gang of ruffians led by the imposing, scarred half-orc known as **Hood**. Known in the district as "**Hood's Rats**," the aggressive group is a constant menace to patrons of the Artists' District, particularly those who pass near their principal employer's establishment: the apothecary of the alchemist, Crux. Unlike most, they have come not only for a nostalgic romp through the spookshow, but also at the behest of their employer — the only other surviving acolyte of the *Fraternitatem Aeternam* and Chelman's longtime rival. With the impending closure of the Theatre Infernalis, Crux hopes to sabotage the theatre's final days and sow enough discord for his crew to sweep in and claim the surviving artifacts of his old fraternity in the resulting chaos.

**Hood (Half-Orc Ftr1):** HP 6; AC 8[11]; Atk short sword (1d6+1) or dagger (1d4+1); Move 12; Save 14; AL C; CL/XP 1/15; **Special:** +1 to hit and damage strength bonus.

**Equipment:** short sword, dagger.

**Hood's Rats (4):** HP 4, 3x2, 2; AC 9[10]; Atk club (1d4); Move 12; Save 18; AL C; CL/XP A/5; **Special:** none.

**Equipment:** dagger.

**Development:** You should set up Hood's Rats as antagonists early in the characters' visit to the Theatre Infernalis. The group makes itself a loud and disruptive presence, driving other patrons away from seats and tables only to relocate themselves minutes later, and repeat the process again just for the sheer maliciousness of making others uncomfortable. In some cases, they set near-empty drinks so other patrons accidentally spill them, sparking a confrontation where minor pushing and shoving ensues, only for patrons to back down against the imposing bulk and intimidating glare of Hood before replacing the spilled beverage with a fresh drink.

To help propel narrative events, you should set up a similar confrontation with characters after they witness other patrons subjected to the gang's cruel behavior. The gang typically sends its smallest member, the weaselly Shad, to sit in an unclaimed seat at a table with other patrons and begin making loud, brash boasts and insulting commentary toward anyone within earshot. As soon as his actions spark reprisal and a confrontation ensues, the other members make their imposing presence known, claiming they were seated at the table first and were only away to fetch drinks. Hood snarls and snaps at any who fail to back down from the gang's threats. The characters may experience a similar scenario of harassment, or one of Hood's gang might simply insult or intentionally spill a drink on one of the party members.

While this confrontation should not involve bloodshed, it should be full of bluster and threats from the gang. If it appears the characters may draw weapons, Luther quickly intervenes to escort Hood's Rats to the spookshow, and indicates to the characters that they are next in line. This sequence ensures the gang has to opportunity to sabotage the spookshow ahead of the characters' tour and properly propels the adventure's events.

# Spookshow

The spookshow portion of the theatre contains a series of seven chambers that model a physical and metaphysical journey through the Abyss which, among other effects, are intended to spook and scare patrons.

## Spooks and Scares

A spooked creature becomes uneasy due to the nature of its surroundings or an event that it has witnessed. It takes a -2 penalty on saving throws as its mind conjures potential horrors in every shadow. However, it is ready to face danger, and is surprised only on a roll of 1.

A scared creature is noticeably afraid, jumping at shadows, odd sights, and unexplained noises. It suffers a -4 penalty on saving throws. Each time the scared individual fails its saving throw, it must roll 1d6. On a roll of 1, instead of fleeing it curls up in a ball in fear and refuses to move for 1 hour.

## A10. Hellmouth

Like the theatre's façade, a demon's leering face, carefully crafted of painted plaster, beckons patrons to enter. Visible fumes of sulphur and brimstone leak from the demon's gaping mouth, and beyond, a hellish light glows and flickers to illuminate a spinning tunnel leading to the spookshow beyond. The walls of the tunnel writhe and undulate in a stomach-churning manner.



Driven by a hidden conveyor, this 15ft-long, spinning tunnel is decorated with lurid, leering faces of the damned, swirling flames, and grasping claws that have a convincing effect on those within. When first entering the tunnel, and in any subsequent round they remain within it, a creature must roll below his dexterity on 3d6 or fall prone, taking 1 point of damage. A creature falling prone must make a saving throw each round it remains so or become nauseated for 1d4 rounds (-1 to hit and saves). A creature can stand up by successfully rolling below his dexterity on 4d6, but the tunnel is subtly tilted in such a way that prone creatures slide 5ft toward the north end each round. There is no way to disable the spinning tunnel from operating apart from a lever in the upper service hallway (A9).

## A11. Cackling Caves

The ruddy glows of concealed crucibles illuminate craggy, flame-licked cliffs in this hellscape. Cackling creatures — skittering imps and small, gruesome fiends with melting features — emerge briefly from behind the room's crags and crevices to leer and gape at you, while the tines of hidden pitchforks spring forth to prod you forward, despite there being no apparent exit.

This room's plaster walls are sculpted to appear as cave walls with many nooks and crannies inhabited by leering and cackling mannequins crafted in the shapes of imps and quasits. Creatures who enter the area must make a saving throw or be spooked for the following 1d3x10 minutes.

Creatures who proceed into the area notice that the floor in some of the alcoves is littered with pierced, blackened corks. The rock façade near the exit to the infernal maelstrom (A12) contains a concealed door that leads to the upper service hallway (A9). Characters who examine that section of wall find the door.

**Trap:** Creatures entering the marked spaces are targeted by the demon's prodding pitchforks, which spring forth from hidden recesses to prod patrons toward the room's exit. This trap does not normally damage patrons, but the patrons who most recently passed through the attraction (Hood's Rats) removed the corks, which litter the floor from the tips of the pitchforks. The pitchforks attack as 1 HD creatures and deal 1d2 points of damage. The target is pushed 5ft west or south toward Area A12.

## A12. Infernal Maelstrom

This room's walls are crafted to appear as the eroded shore of a black river. Beneath a thick, glass floor, a whirlpool of oily black water — illuminated by a flashes of harsh, crimson light — swirls underfoot, as though a layer of ice is all that separates you from being sucked into a watery void below.

A hidden conveyor that causes the skillfully painted subfloor to rotate drives this maelstrom. This combined with the flickering light creates a hypnotic effect on all creatures that examine it. Any creature that watches the whirlpool for at least 1 round must make a saving throw or become sickened for 1d4 rounds (-1 to hit and saves).

**Trap:** Two rounds after at least four people enter the room, the glass floor and subfloor alike open like an iris, plunging characters into the ghost pit (A13) below. Characters can avoid this fate and leap to the edge with a successful saving throw (anyone standing in a corner of the room gains a +2 on their save, as the iris only partially reaches them). The way on through the spookshow, however, is down the pit. Characters who did not fall can climb or jump down. As with the prodding pitchforks in the previous room, Hood's Rats sabotaged this trap to hurt the characters, pulling aside the thick cushions that normally protect patrons' falls, leaving only hard, bare floor on which to land. Characters take 1d6 points of damage (save for half).



## A13. Ghost Pit

The maelstrom pit trap in **Area A12** dumps characters into this unlit chamber. Characters with darkvision can immediately see that it is fashioned like a cave and that thick cushions have been pushed against the walls away from the opening above. All can smell the smoke that hangs within the air here. Two **traps** await the unwary who enter this chamber.

**Spiteful Spectre Trap:** When anyone approaches within 10ft of the east wall, a “ghost” manifests to terrify them for 1 round. This effect is accomplished through the subtle channeling of smoke and the clever placement of a special lantern projector that cycles through a series of slides to animate the spectral figure. A mechanically cranked bellows device produces her scream. Read the following description when this trap is activated.

From the darkness emerges a haunting figure: a spectral apparition of a beautiful woman whose features quickly begin to rot as the flesh falls from her face and her mouth opens in an ear-splitting scream.

Anyone who fails a saving throw when the spectre emerges is spooked and deafened for 1 round.

**Fiendish Flames Trap:** Another shock awaits frightened patrons who flee toward the west wall of the room. If creatures move adjacent to the back wall or 4 rounds have passed since the first character entered the room, floor plates trigger goutts of flames that erupt from a hidden furnace as hollow laughter echoes throughout the chamber, and a section of wall on the east side of the room slides aside to reveal the exit. The flames normally are meant to light the room and reveal the exit from the otherwise dark room. But unfortunately for the characters, the effect has again been sabotaged, and the harmless jets meant merely to surprise patrons have been redirected into the room to instead unleash searing tongues of flames at those triggering the effect. The flames target any creatures within 10ft of the west wall for 1d4 points of damage (save for half).

## A14. Mirror Maze

Moving mirrors of all shapes and sizes line the strangely angled walls of this glass-and-mirror maze, turning or bending in ways that make the hallway difficult to navigate and disorienting to view. Each reflection is more strangely distorted than the last, while small creatures framing the mirrors seem to animate to torture the various images reflected within.

This room attempts to foil the patrons’ perceptions as they try to navigate the maze and demonstrates the miseries of the damned as personally as possible by inflicting the torture on the viewers’ reflections. Navigating the maze is difficult due to the confusing, shifting mirrors and moving glass barriers triggered by hidden floor plates. Due to the shifting walls and visual distractions — as well as a couple of carefully sabotaged glass walls that no longer move thanks to Hood’s gang — traversing the room takes 1d4+2 rounds. For each round spent in the chamber, any characters present experience a disorienting effect from the mirrors. See the sidebar for details.

The Hood’s Rats’ meddling with the mirror maze exposed a secret service door — normally better concealed by the maze’s structure — that leads to the lower service hallway (**A7**). The door is slightly ajar. If they attempt to enter the cramped hallway beyond, however, **Brarl** (L male human, 4hp), an actor preparing for his role on the Path of the Damned (**A15**), angrily halts them and roughly slams the panel shut.

## A15. Path of the Damned

A dark, cave-like tunnel opens into a hellish landscape lit by smoldering crucibles, as a narrow path winds through a horrific scene. On each side of the path, four tortured souls have been lashed to boulders, each writhing and screaming as vultures and crows tug at their guts and pluck at their eyes.

Four boulders flank the path, two on each side. Each side has one writhing human automaton surrounded by automaton carrion birds that appear to be feasting on their freshly exposed bowels, while the other

### Hazards of the Mirror Maze


One of the following effects occurs each round in the shifting mirrors that the maze places in front of any characters who are in the maze that round. If the characters split into multiple groups within the maze, then one effect occurs each round per group. Roll 1d6 each round, rerolling any previously obtained result.

The effects are non-magical and accomplished via clever practical effects, mechanics, and careful back-lighting of the mirrors. Regardless of their mundane nature, they can be quite realistic and even frightening to the unprepared or easily startled. Those experiencing the effects must make a saving throw after each exposure or be spooked for 1 minute. Spooked creatures who fail additional saves become scared\* for 1 minute. After the characters escape the maze, they escape to the Path of the Damned (**A15**).

1d6	Result
1	A demonic fiend draws back a hammer and seems to shatter the mirror, and the mirror’s reflection with it. The reflected image appears to crack into a thousand pieces as the demon’s lifeless, glaring eyes stare and its mouth stretches menacingly in a silent cackle.
2	Small winged fiends tug and pull on the four corners of this mirror, horrifically distorting the subject’s reflection like pulled taffy, as if the subject is being stretched apart on some hellish torture rack.
3	Skeletal demons animate and claw at the subject’s reflection, which slowly begins to turn into a taunting skeleton in the mirror’s darkened glass as flames appear to lick at the feet of the horrid transformation.
4	A duo of tiny winged demons turn the crank of what looks like a large winepress built into the frame of this mirror. As the screw turns ever-downward, the subject’s reflection compresses as if squashed by the torturous device.
5	A ruddy hue begins to halo the subject’s slowly flickering reflection, until the image bursts into the flames of eternal damnation and the flesh appears to melt and warp.
6	A frame of chittering demonic skulls gapes and leers at the subject, as they turn their lifeless eyes toward the reflection that begins to morph and shift into a demonic form, growing horns, a forked tail, and scorched, red flesh.

\*See sidebar above for details of the scared condition.

## THE BLIGHT: RICHARD PETT'S CROOKED CITY



This final room is actually a lift that rises to deposit participants back on the upper floor balcony (A6). Two rounds after anyone enters the chamber, floor triggers cause the rib bone gate to slam shut and the lift to rise to the floor above. As it ascends, the ruddy glow fades and the chamber is bathed in a bright, heavenly white light from above and below as the slightly discordant sound of a damaged trumpet sounds out. The demonic automatons swiftly disappear and are replaced by small cherubic figures, as if those within the lift have escaped the Abyss and eternal damnation and are ascending toward Heaven. However, just as their ascent ends and the lift comes to a screeching halt, the other rib bone gate opens, the white light disappears, the cherubs retreat out of sight, and the entire north wall — constructed of pads and pillows painted to appear as rock — suddenly springs out, forcibly ejecting anyone in the chamber onto the balcony (A6). However, if the characters received aid from Brarl and Cynthia on the Path of the Damned (A15), the lift's spring-loaded wall does not activate to allow for a less jarring exit.

Thus ends the tour of the Theatre Infernalis. Two rounds after this expulsion, the gate slams shut, a curtain automatically drops to conceal the apparatus, and the entire mechanism descends to reset and repeat the process.

## Event 2: To Nail a Thief

After characters exit the attraction one way or another and have made their way back down to the lobby, they note that the previously bustling area is now almost entirely empty. Hood and his gang have left the premises but not before they followed their boss's instructions to remove one of the four *blessed nails* that keep the half-opened Abyssal gate within the Theatre Infernalis in check. The staff became aware of the missing nail shortly after but did not see the gang steal it, nor have they connected the gang to the theft.

Chelman is apoplectic with rage about the theft and is certain, due to where they sat or disinformation that was sowed, that the characters are the culprits. For their part, the theatre's employees are utterly oblivious to the danger the nail's removal presents, but they are prepared to defend their employer's accusations, and have removed patrons so that they can confront the characters and deal with the matter away from the prying eyes of the public. Chelman should come off as an off-kilter, senile lunatic, and the host Luther, actors Brarl and Cynthia, and the mechanic Mattie soon appear to put some space between the characters and their boss, while also casting suspicious and hostile eyes on the party. If characters never took seats near the nail, instead assume that one of Hood's gang subtly implicates characters in the nail's removal before his exit with the stolen property by tipping off Jaym and Luther, who fall for the bluff.

**Development:** As you let the eerie abandonment of the theatre set in with characters, the bartender Jaym throws a bar across the front doors to prevent the characters from leaving as Chelman approaches them in a fit of senile rage. Cries and accusations from the suddenly animated proprietor echo throughout the now-empty lobby: "What have you done with my nail, you inconsiderate pustules?"; "True hell upon us all for disturbing their rest!"; and "Give back the nail before I take it back myself!" he yells among other ravings. Chelman may even break from the throng and rush for the southeast booth if the characters were previously seated there: "Theeeeeere! It was there! And there you sat, just below!" he screams, thrusting his fingers toward the booth before pointing to the four corners of the theatre. "The others are there, there, and there, but without the one all four will fail!"

At this point, characters should catch a glimpse of the nail in the southwest corner of the lobby, the heavily engraved square spike driven deeply into a beam near the ceiling. As Chelman continues his mad fit, made all the more disarming by his outlandish and garish dress, Luther eventually manages to secure and calm him somewhat before turning back to the no-doubt confused characters, dropping his previous feigned foreign accent and speaking with the blunt dialect of a true native of the Blight, "Well, you 'eard the old man. What'd you do wiv 'is nail?"

two boulders each have a partial writhing automaton but with the head and one arm of a real human actor skillfully disguised to blend in with the rest of the automaton. The rest of the real actors' bodies are cleverly concealed within the boulder from where they operate machinery that controls the scene, triggering the automatons and flaring the crucibles to illuminate the horror. Witnessing the gory display and experiencing the stench of the ripe pig intestines used in the convincing charade require a saving throw to avoid becoming nauseated for 1d4 rounds (-1 to hit and saves).

The actors — the rough-looking **Brarl** (see A14) and the distraught **Cynthia** (N female middle-aged human, 3hp) — play their parts convincingly, writhing and screaming while pulling on levers and pulleys from within the hollow boulder to animate the scene. However, if the characters are heavily injured or are actively seeking aid from the previously encountered sabotaged effects, (other than simple fear effects), the actors stop to assist. After disturbingly retracting their heads and arms from the partial automatons, they exit through trapdoors into the lower service hallway (A7), pull levers to alert Chelman at the ticket stand of injured participants, disengage the spring-loaded wall in the heavenly ascent (A16), and rush around to the Path of the Damned to help patrons exit.

### A16. Heavenly Ascent

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The rib bones of some huge creature part to allow entry into this small, cave-like chamber inhabited by more impish automatons. Smoldering coals are visible just below the glass floor, giving the room a ruddy glow and a smoky atmosphere.

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## THE CROOKED NAIL

Chelman and his employees certainly appear wholly unamused at the prospect that petty souvenir hunters might have removed any relics from the venerable institution and seem ready to take reparations in flesh. Characters can try to convince them of their innocence, and they are more readily believed if they were visibly wounded or received assistance at the end of their tour through the spookshow from Brarl or Cynthia. If they submit to a pat-down search request, Chelman grudgingly accepts that they had nothing to do with the theft. If the characters convince them of their innocence, the employees subtly indicate their sympathy about their raving employer and mutter some apologies for the situation.

There is no real intention for bloodshed here, and if it appears the situation may escalate into violence with a bit of rough handling as employees attempt to forcibly pat-down the party, Luther senses the characters' innocence and takes control of the situation saying, "Well, if it weren't you, as ya say, it must've been them others — 'ood's Rats, ah fink they're called. I saw 'em sniffin' 'round that table afore they left, and it looks like they even sabotaged the spookshow to get some revenge on ya. We can pay ya if you think ya can gerrit back from 'em — no questions asked?"

Either way, the employees attempt to satisfy their employer and set the characters on the trail to recover the artifact from Hood's Rats, whom they hint may be employed by a local apothecary of ill-repute in the district. They initially offer the characters 50gp if they can recover the nail and return it to Chelman to calm his raging fit, but their proprietor immediately interjects and instead offers 150gp to each character for the nail's recovery, much to the surprise of all, but with the caveat that the characters must return and replace the nail within 24 hours, "else all is lost."

"Seems the old man's motivated, and ya might get your revenge on these thugs," Luther intones. "D'ya fink ya can gerrit back for 'im soon?"

# Chapter Two: For Want of a Nail

The characters can locate Hood's Rats relatively easily — they are notorious agitators in the Artists' Quarter, and have many enemies. The gang is currently employed by shriveled old Crux, a snake oil salesman, first-order con artist, and collector of occult artifacts, which he displays in the back of his rundown apothecary. Crux's establishment has no sign beyond a faded arcane glyph hanging on a worn breadboard, and has no official name, but it or he are variously referred to as "Crux's Apothecary," "that crooked occult dealer," "the slack-jawed alchemist," "the dusty, crusty pharmacist," and "the fourth or fifth apothecary when you're walking east near the intersection of Crowley and Renfield."

What the characters do not know is that Crux has a long history with the Theatre Infernalis — or, rather, its precursor establishment. Crux is the other survivor of the disaster that befell the Fraternitatem Æternam, and he has long sought to usurp control of the building and any surviving artifacts of the order, resenting Chelman's public displays and the audacity of the spookshow. But for all his conniving nature, he's also inherently unstable and has been more prone to brooding and resentment than direct action — until now.

\* See *The Blight: Richard Pett's Crooked City* by Frog God Games for details.

## B. Crux's Apothecary

This single-story apothecary shop is not particularly popular nor thriving, and these days it serves more as a front for Crux's greater ambitions of advantage and power in the Blight's occult underground. Most of these ambitions involve the acquisition of minor religious relics and items of perceived power, either through trade with other like-minded collectors or, more usually, via theft carried out by the street gang currently in his employ. But for all his age, Crux is charismatic and influential in his small world and has managed to convince Hood's Rats that his discoveries are leading to some great breakthrough revelation, just as the old salesman has convinced his customers for decades that his bogus curatives were having positive and lasting effects.

### B1. Front Stoop

Hood's Rats perpetually loiter on the front stoop outside the apothecary at all hours, aggressively soliciting passersby by mocking their visible ailments such as goitres, limps, or rashes, and sneering derisively if the pedestrians do not stop for the cures promised within. **Hood and 3 gang members** are here. If the characters approach from the street, the gang members recognize them and become immediately

defensive as their hands drop subtly to concealed daggers and sword hilts; the street-raised toughs anticipate only violent retribution for their recent shenanigans.

**Hood (Half-Orc Ftr1):** HP 6; AC 8[11]; Atk short sword (1d6+1) or dagger (1d4+1); Move 12; Save 14; AL C; CL/XP 1/15; **Special:** +1 to hit and damage strength bonus.

**Equipment:** short sword, dagger.

**Hood's Rats (3):** HP 4, 3x2, 2; AC 9[10]; Atk club (1d4); Move 12; Save 18; AL C; CL/XP A/5; **Special:** none.

**Equipment:** dagger.

**Development:** Hood might be willing to engage the characters in a derisive parlay, seeking to avoid an outright brawl in front of his boss's establishment. Cornered here at his place of employment, Hood is borderline hostile, but characters can attempt to coerce an introduction to Crux. If successful, Hood begrudgingly orders his Rats aside to allow characters to enter the shop. If the characters try to enter the shop before Hood grants them passage, the gang members draw their weapons to defend this hostile intrusion into their territory.

### B2. Sales Floor

The solid, wooden door in the south wall of this room opens into a space crammed with tables and shelves cluttered with glass vials holding noxious elixirs and tins of foul-smelling pastes, along with drawers brimming with dried herbs and sprigs of dubious curatives. Behind a long wooden counter, an open door leads to a hallway stretching toward the back of the shop.

The shop itself is a cluttered, tangled mess: the artifacts and relics of a thousand cultures and belief systems smashed into a few hundred square feet. Here, Crux's customers find all manner of esotericisms and oddities, from jars and bottles holding a thousand species of insects, to half-open drawers overstuffed with spell components, rare herbs, and pungent incenses from the far corners of the world. Talismans, sigils, and seals of every culture dangle from leather straps on bent hooks, promising to make one walk unseen or find one's true love, while Crux's self-made elixirs, tonics, and poultices promise to cure everything from the grey ache to swamp ague. The overloaded shelves hold more mummified things than could be counted in a week.



## THE CROOKED NAIL



The shop's custodian is a misshapen **homunculus** named Neegle, a masterless specimen long ago adopted by Crux and calmed halfway back to sanity. Though its body is twisted and stunted, with malformed, atrophied legs that dangle from between the bars of a rusted old birdcage in which it is bound, it is quite mobile, suspended from a pulley-operated telescoping crane that allows it access to the shop's highest nooks and crannies. Unlike most homunculi, Neegle is capable of speech and even occasionally displays intelligence, though it typically speaks in confusing, squeaking rhymes punctuated by fits of disturbing, artificial laughter. No one in recent memory has heard Crux offer a single encouraging word to Neegle. He instead resorts to contempt and outright mockery of the pathetic creature. Despite the abuse, Neegle is a fawning, over-preening sycophant who exists only for his adopted master's affections, and can often be found cranking a strange, quack electromagnetic device with one gimp leg while applying charged electrodes to the abusive proprietor's bulk to ease his aches and pains.

**Homunculus:** HD 2; HP 13; AC 6[13]; **Atk** bite (1d3 plus sleep); **Move** 6 (flying 20); **Save** 16; **AL** N; **CL/XP** 3/60; **Special:** sleep-inducing bite. (*Monstrosities* 251)

**Equipment:** 4 bombs (exploding mixture in bag, 1d4 damage to all in 5ft radius).

**Tactics:** If characters enter forcibly without the go-ahead from Hood, or if they engaged the gang in combat outside, Neegle tosses a bag containing various powders and a vial of oil at the doorway as soon as it

opens. When the bomb hits, the oil ignites the powders to produce a small explosion that deals 1d4 points of damage to anyone within 5ft. If Hood grants entry into the shop, Neegle holds his attack and lets out a cackling peel of taunting snickering when the characters enter, but tosses a bag immediately if his master attacks.

**Development:** The shop contains a wide variety of spell components, occult implements, alchemical apparatus and supplies, snake oils, ointments, liniments, and dubious curatives, all valued at several thousand gold pieces total. But although Crux and his gang possess some stolen property, the characters do not acquire any legal claim on these items (beyond the possible recovery of items stolen from the Theatre Infernalis that its proprietor has hired them to recover) simply by defeating them.

If the characters get overzealous looting the shop or Crux's office, Hood's Rats (if they survived) or even members of the Watch investigate the street disturbance and stop their pilfering before it gets out of hand. But Watch constables properly convinced of any injustice toward the theatre at the hands of Crux and his gang may also agree some additional reward for the characters' trouble could be in order. They can be convinced that some reparations are in order, and they'll allow each character to remove up to 75gp worth of items the Referee deems appropriate to such a shop, including any magical items located in the office (**B4**), albeit under intense scrutiny and review. Indeed, the constables or gang may indulge in similar pilfering themselves before their superiors arrive. Recovery of the *blessed nail* stolen from the theatre is, of course, exempt from any limits the gang or guards may place.

### B3. Hallway of Punks

This precarious stretch of cramped hallway is lined with sagging shelves crowded with jars of pickled specimens: bloated foetuses of all manner of creatures, failed attempts at homunculi creation, two-headed human foetuses, and preserved body parts all compete for space on the overburdened shelves. Some seem to briefly meet the gaze of passersby through half-closed eyelids. The hallway terminates in a pair of closed doors.

Crux is an elderly, corpulent man of advanced age. He is blind in one eye, and prone to phlegmatic coughing fits and involuntary drooling. Though mentally unstable, Crux is keenly intelligent and exceedingly clever, well-connected and well-versed in the occult underworld of Castorhage, where he is known as a dangerous antagonist capable of turning his rivals' plots back against themselves. Though not entirely trustworthy, he compensates his charges well financially, and though unaffectionate in the extreme, can be fiercely defensive of those wayward souls who have fallen into his spiraling path. His frog-like facial features hint that he may have some Briny\* blood coursing through his veins.

**Crux (MU3):** HP 10; AC 9[10] or 2[17] (missile) and 4[15] (melee) from *shield* spell; Atk +1 dagger (1d4+1); Move 12; Save 12 (+1, ring); AL C; CL/XP 4/120; **Special:** +2 save (spells, wands, staves), spells (3/1).

**Spells:** 1st—*magic missile* (x2), *shield*; 2nd—*darkness* 15ft radius.

**Equipment:** +1 dagger, ring of protection +1, 2 potions of healing, 3 bombs (exploding mixture in bag, 1d4 damage to all in 5ft radius), 20gp.

\* See *The Blight: Richard Pett's Crooked City* by Frog God Games for details.

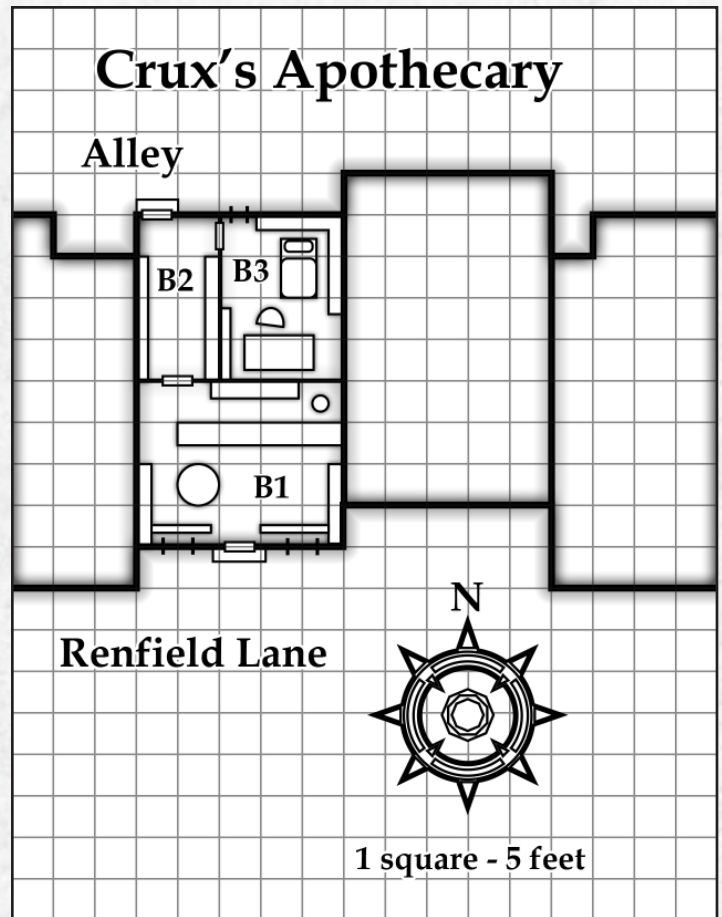
**Tactics:** For his part, Crux is very aware of why the characters have come to his shop, and does not intend to parlay with the group. Watching through the dirty front windows from the perceived safety of the doorway to this hallway, any confrontation outside his shop causes Crux to cast *shield*. If Hood grants the characters entry, Crux forces a wide smile while claiming "I don't know where it is!" He prepares to flee at the first sign of violence, and can be convinced to turn over the *blessed nail* voluntarily if characters press the issue.

If the characters instead forced themselves into his shop, Crux throws a bomb at the first character to enter before fleeing down the hallway to exit out the back door. In either case, to cover his escape, he knocks over two jars of embalming fluid on overstuffed shelves as he exits the premises, releasing 2 **pixie zombies** that immediately attack anyone entering the hallway. If Chelman's attempts to flee fail, and he is reduced to half his hit points or fewer, he pleads pathetically for his life while pointing toward the back office (B4) where the *blessed nail* the characters seek is hidden in his uppermost desk drawer.

**Pixie Zombies (2):** HD 1d6 hp; HP 6, 5; AC 6[13]; Atk strike (1d4); Move 9 (flying 12); Save 17; AL C; CL/XP 1/15; **Special:** immune to sleep and charm. (**Monstrosities** 374)

**Development:** Crux grows exceptionally nervous at the characters' confrontation, repeating cryptically that "What's in the theatre is rightfully mine," and "Chelman's demons have to catch up to him sometime," though he fails to elaborate further, and remains vague and mysterious. At the first sign of violence, he throws a single bomb at the closest character and attempts to swiftly flee out the back door, releasing the pixie zombies on his way out as described above.

**Treasure:** Besides Crux's gear, the 26 pixie zombies preserved in embalming fluid could have some value to the right party. If the items are recovered, they could fetch as much as 5gp each from a suitable magic-user or underground oddities collector. However, removing objects from the shop carries the same caveat for looting items (as detailed in B2).



### B4. Cluttered Office

This messy office and bedroom contains stacks of bound arcane publications arranged in teetering stacks, and a messy desk and shelves stacked with occult implements, carefully balanced alchemical apparatus, and numerous relics of questionable provenance and worth. The smell of rotting food is strong here, wafting from several half-eaten meals on tin plates and bowls haphazardly placed on piles all around the bed.

Crux's domicile is a cluttered room that serves as office, bedroom, and collection archive. It may at first seem an extension of the shop, but it actually houses his private collection. The office has a single guardian: Crux's pet, a deceitful **malformian** named Happy. Here in this sanctuary, the foul creature waits to surprise intruders, regardless of the hour. It prefers to remain on its display stand on the desk and attempts to surprise anyone searching the desk to recover the *blessed nail*.

**Happy (Malformian):** HD 1+2; HP 6; AC 7[12]; Atk weapon (1d6); Move 9; Save 17; AL C; CL/XP 1/15; **Special:** none. (**Monstrosities** 314)

**Treasure:** Like the shop, this room is cluttered with all manner of occult collectibles and religious artifacts, including the mummified head of a vampire that still grimaces at the presentation of holy symbols, a twig fetish of a hideous frog demon, and a red-gold censer containing some bizarre deep-sea creature. There are 32 such occult implements, each worth 10gp and weighing approximately a half pound apiece. In addition, Crux kept an ample supply of potions and scrolls here for both personal use and trade, the stock of which includes: 4 *potions of healing*, 2 *potions of heroism*, 2 *potions of treasure finding*, a *scroll of invisibility*, 2 *scrolls of read languages*, 2 *scrolls of magic missile*, a *scroll of shield*, a *scroll of*

## THE CROOKED NAIL



sleep, and a scroll of monster summoning I. Looting this office carries the same caveat for looting shop items (as detailed in B2).

In the uppermost desk drawer is the stolen *blessed nail*. Around 7in in length, this rough-forged spike is covered in sigils and wards from head to point, and is now severely bent from Hood's wrenching of the item from the ceiling beam in the theatre. With its recovery, the characters can return to the Theatre Infernalis to fulfill their obligation and presumably fetch their reward.

### Greater Miscellaneous Magical Item

#### Blessed Nails

Crafted in groups of four, one being useless without the others, these 7in-long iron spikes are engraved with cabalistic symbols to protect against the trespass of demons. When the four spikes are nailed into the corners of an area no larger than 100ft by 100ft, their magic is expended and the area falls under a *protection from evil* spell which protects the area from evil forces and bars extradimensional movement, summoning, and even *gate* spells. This effect extends 50ft above and below the enclosed area and persists for as long as all four nails remain in place. If some, but not all, of the nails are removed, the effects are temporarily suppressed until they are replaced. If all the nails are removed, the magic permanently dissipates after 24 hours unless all four nails are replaced within that time.



# Chapter Three: An Encore of Bore

While the characters have been away recovering the missing nail, Chelman's worst nightmares have come true within the theatre. Absent the wards and protections of the complete set of *blessed nails*, the old portal to the Abyss leftover from the days of the theatre's previous incarnation has slowly reopened, and its demonic influence has warped and corrupted the unprotected interior as demonic minions spill forth to herald the arrival of their long-imprisoned master.

The partially opened portal has similarly corrupted most of the theatre's employees. A special fate awaited Chelman, who was dragged away to the mercy of Darmathon, an ooze demon once highly stationed in the Abyssal hierarchy but now a shadow of its former self because of its years of imprisonment, its might diminished to but a fraction of its true power in the intervening decades. The awful transformation of Chelman now awaits deep in the spookshow, a frail infernal puppet utterly at the diminished ooze demon's disposal.

This portion of the adventure uses the same Theatre Infernalis map as in **Chapter 1**, but now the rooms' features and occupants have changed due to the corrupting influence of Darmathon. The changes are reflected in the room descriptions below.

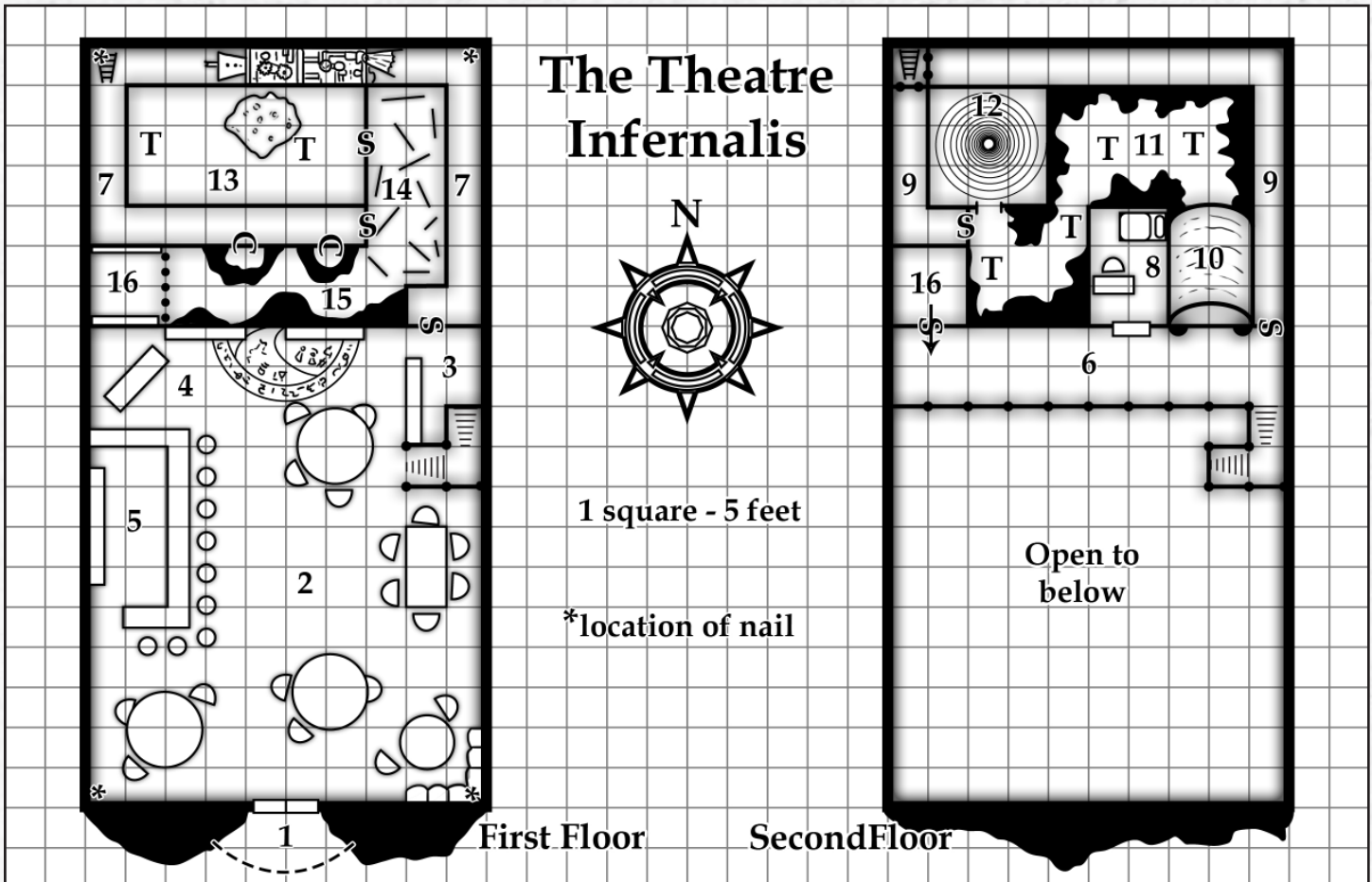
## Front of House

### C1. Sulphurous Façade

The theatre has remained closed since the characters' departure, and as they approach the main doors they note a sulphurous pall heavy on the air that leaks from the barred doors. Within, all is eerily quiet, though the automatons continue going through their clockwork motions, with no one to witness their mechanical frights.

### C2. Wrecked Lobby

Once lively, the lobby is now eerily quiet save for the mechanical whir of automatons that remain set to their macabre motions, now with no one left to surprise or frighten. Tables and chairs have been overturned and tossed throughout



## THE CROOKED NAIL

the area, and a mustard-yellow brume hangs low in the air, carrying with it a foul, sulphurous stench. The ticket stand has been smashed to splinters, the display cases in the rear appear ransacked, and the bar itself is smoldering from having been set partially alight. Whether through the mist's distortive haze or some trick of the low lighting, a faint phosphorescence seems to silently pulsate near the bar's far side.

The main seating area here is empty, with only the intriguing hints of the shattered ticket stand and the disarray of the smoldering bar serving as cryptic clues to some mysterious conflict. As characters move to investigate what has become of their recent employer and his staff, some of the tavern's mechanical traps that were previously seen only from afar now spring out in their faces.

The specific nature and placement of the tavern's mechanical surprises are left for the Referee to determine, but they might include infernal automatons that spring forth from adjacent walls, grasping demonic claws that reach out from under nearby floorboards to grasp at ankles before retreating, a brace of fluttering papier-mâché imps that buzz past someone's head as they screech along their wire tethers, or tables and chairs that scrape mysteriously across the floor, as if moved by unseen forces. None are harmful, but the Referee can heighten the dramatic tension by initially exaggerating the frightening effects of the apparatus as they trigger, perhaps describing an onset as the charge of some foul creature and instructing characters who fail saving throws to roll initiative as if the effect is an actual attack, only to reveal the true nature of the ruse after they are convinced some unseen horror has set upon them.

Many animated horrors are around the lobby but they are treated as a single, automatically resetting **trap**. An attempt to find and disable all of them takes 1d4 hours. Multiple exposures to the startling animations renew the duration but do not increase the subject's fear level.

Though characters may move to immediately replace the missing *blessed nail* in their possession to its former resting place and be done, any who think to check the southwest corner immediately notice shattered chairs, a bloodstained table, and a hole left behind from when its

companion spike was pried from its wooden prison. The other three nails are now all in the possession of the Wandering Damned (see **Squaring the Circle** below) and the corrupted Chelman (see **Area C15**). Replacing the recovered *blessed nail* is now only the start of their task.

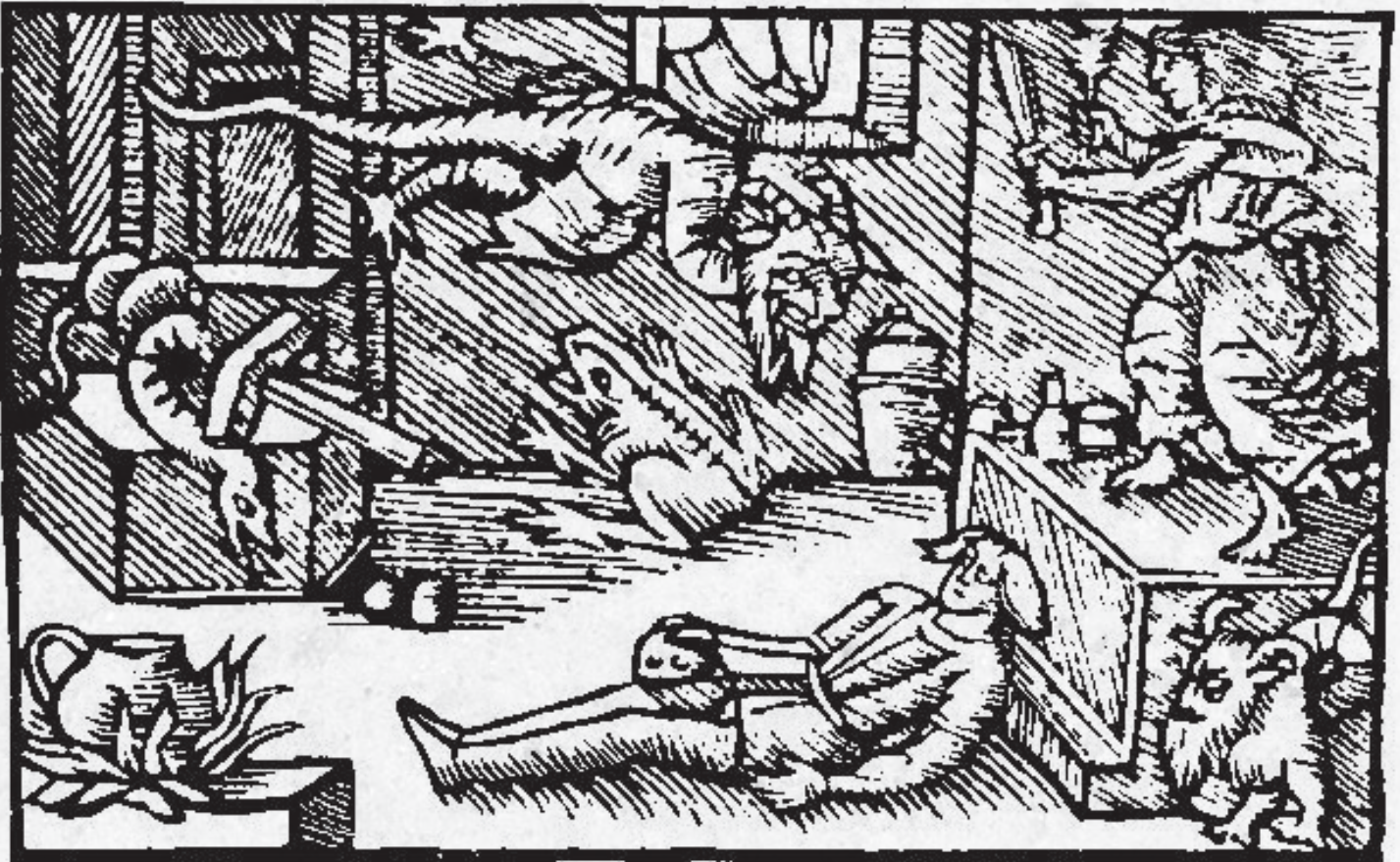
### C3. Smashed Ticket Stand

The ticket desk now rests in two splintered pieces streaked with blood and gore, as if something was violently pulled through the stout oak furniture from the other side, breaking the desk in half.

Chelman was here at his usual station when Darmathon awoke, and the ooze demon snatched him up and pulled him through the ticket stand and into the nearby portal. The wrinkled remains of a human calf and foot, still adorned with embroidered silk pants and a pointed-toe slipper, are lodged in the ticket stand's ruin, one of the few remnants of Chelman's mortal form. The transformed proprietor now guards his tormentor in the Prison of the Damned (C15). An oily smear runs from the floor here toward the nearby display cases. The hinged bookshelf that conceals the entrance to the lower service hallway (C7) has been knocked slightly askew in the turmoil.

### C4. Damaged Display

The display cabinets at the rear of the bar seem to have largely escaped the theatre's turmoil unscathed, save for a single case surrounded by a semicircle of shattered glass. The arches of silver glyphs that radiate across the floor here now glow as if fresh from the forge, causing the wood into which they are inlaid to smoke viciously in foul-smelling streamers.





Two of the glass cases along the back wall have survived, and the contents of the Abyssal trophies and fraternal accoutrements displays remain undisturbed. The third case containing the four quasit corpses, however, lies in ruin, and thick shards of glass are scattered in a wide semicircle radiating around the display, as if the case exploded from within. No trace of the diminutive demon corpses remain, as they were the first to be “awakened,” along with the portal, and escaped to remove the other *blessed nails* imprisoning their master.

The remnants of the summoning circle that partially radiates into this area have seemingly come to life, the inlaid silver glyphs and sigils that make up the magic circle glowing white-hot and leaking the sulphurous fumes that have created the haze throughout the lobby. An oily smear runs from the circle’s perimeter to the nearby ticket stand. A magic-user who rolls below his intelligence on 4d6 knows that the *blessed nails* must have been responsible for locking the circle’s magic in an “out of phase” state which the removal of the single nail unlocked, re-substantiating the former state as both an open portal that endures and a warding circle that immediately failed due to the wall that has been built across it. The circle’s glowing glyphs are immune to damage, and attempts to destroy them frustratingly fail as the inlaid sigils reform right before the characters’ eyes. Finally — and horrifyingly — within the portal the characters discover what little remains of Chelman’s other leg, torn off at the knee while still dressed in esoterica, bloody, smashed, and strangely melded with the floor, as if melted into it.

The floor near the circle contains about a dozen scorch marks embedded with shattered glass that still smolders slightly, adding to the smog. Characters can detect the lingering smell of alcohol arising from these spots and spot burned bottle labels on the glass shards — the remains of makeshift incendiaries thrown from the bar (C5) and evidence of bartender Jaym’s last stand.

**Treasure:** The +1 *spear* and the blessed-but-damaged longsword have been knocked from the wall and now lie on the ground. Both may prove useful in the final confrontation with Darmathon (see A4 in Chapter 1 for details of these items). The Abyssal relics, however, are all fakes. The sample of “River Styx” is just dirty water, the Abyssal rock samples are various types of pumice, the pieces of “Nabasu Wing” are cow leather,

the “Glabrezu Pincer” is an enormous crayfish claw, the “Nalfeshnee Pinfeathers” are from an ostrich, the “Vrock Spore” is a plant vine, and the “Babau Slime” is paint.

## C5. Burned Bar

The strong smell of alcohol emanates from a partially burned bar. The back cabinets have been largely emptied of bottles, and the bar is strewn with shredded towels and discarded corks. A lantern with an open hood is blackened from flames, as if used to ignite something. The bar top still smolders from having been set alight.

The bar is the site of Jaym the bartender’s last stand, where he hastily assembled makeshift alcohol incendiaries and fruitlessly hurled them at the demonic entities emerging from the reopened portal beneath the display cabinets (C4). Jaym’s heroic actions not only failed to save him — they damned him. His close proximity to the pulsating portal bathed him in foul abyssal energies, and even as his fiery assault continued, his mortal shell mutated into a horrific approximation of the man he once was.

Jaym is now an **abyssal larva** that writhes on the floor behind the bar and emerges to attack if the characters cause too much disturbance in **Areas C2** through **C4** or if they approach too close to the bar. Adding to the horror of Jaym’s recognizable corpulent face and patchy beard appearing perched on the bloated body of an enormous, fiendish maggot, the bartender still wears the shredded remains of his black and red warlock costume, its high collar and pointed hat adding a macabre accent to the terrible transformation. The creature opens its attack with its maggot spray before squirming its purulent bulk over the bar to charge the nearest opponent.

**Jaym (Abyssal Larva):** HD 3; HP 19; AC 8[11]; Atk acidic bite (2d4); Move 6; Save 14; AL C; CL/XP 4/120; **Special:** maggot

## THE CROOKED NAIL

spray (1/day, 10ft radius, save or sickened, -1 to hit and saves). (*The Tome of Horrors Complete* 13)

fiendish undead with the quasits providing a simple animating force without intelligence.

### C6. Brumous Balcony

The theatre's balcony is unchanged, though the yellowish brume is thick here, and the gaping mouth of the spookshow entrance (C10) almost has the appearance of a living creature, with the fumes entering and exiting the tunnel in a slow rhythm that makes it appear as if the entire structure is breathing. The ironbound door leading into Chelman's office and bedroom (C8) hangs loosely from its hinges, with some of the room's content spilling out into the hallway. The secret entrance into the upper service hallway (C9) is partially open.

## Squaring the Circle

Replacing the recovered *blessed nail* in the beam over the southeast corner does not disrupt the portal because the other nails have since been removed by demon-possessed corpses of slain theatre employees, and are now in their dangerous hands as they wander the remains of the spookshow. To complete the adventure, the characters must replace all the *blessed nails* to re-establish the protective wards that interfere with the portal, and possibly defeat the ooze demon Darmathon to do so. The characters can determine this by examining the magical properties of the recovered *blessed nail* or of the awakened summoning circle at the damaged display (C4). The characters can also discover this information documented in an occult tome in Chelman's office.

The three other *blessed nails* are in the possession of the animated corpses of Mattie the mechanic (in Area C9), Luther the host (in Area C12), and Chelman, who has undergone a demonic transformation and who is likely to be the final carrier found (in Area C15). The corpses of the actors Brarl and Cynthia (in Area C13) are also animated, but they do not possess *blessed nails*. If required, you can control the timing and pacing of the adventure by having these creatures wander through the spookshow, enabling you to strategically place these pitiful creatures in the characters' paths as they explore or reserve them to draw characters deeper into the corrupted attraction.

The Wandering Damned are human corpses animated by the recently released mummified quasits from the display cases (C4). The employees' corpses now appear desiccated and drained of all life, though each has a now-bloated quasit corpse riding on its back, its tiny claws deeply embedded through the corpses' flesh and into its spinal cord, manipulating it like a puppet. Despite how this bizarre form of physical possession may appear, each strange symbiotic pairing is a single

**Wandering Damned (Zombie) (4):** HD 2; HP 15, 13, 12, 10; AC 8[11]; Atk strike (1d8); Move 6; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 2/30;

**Special:** immune to sleep and charm.

**Equipment:** *blessed nail*\* (Mattie and Luther only).

\*See sidebox in Chapter 2

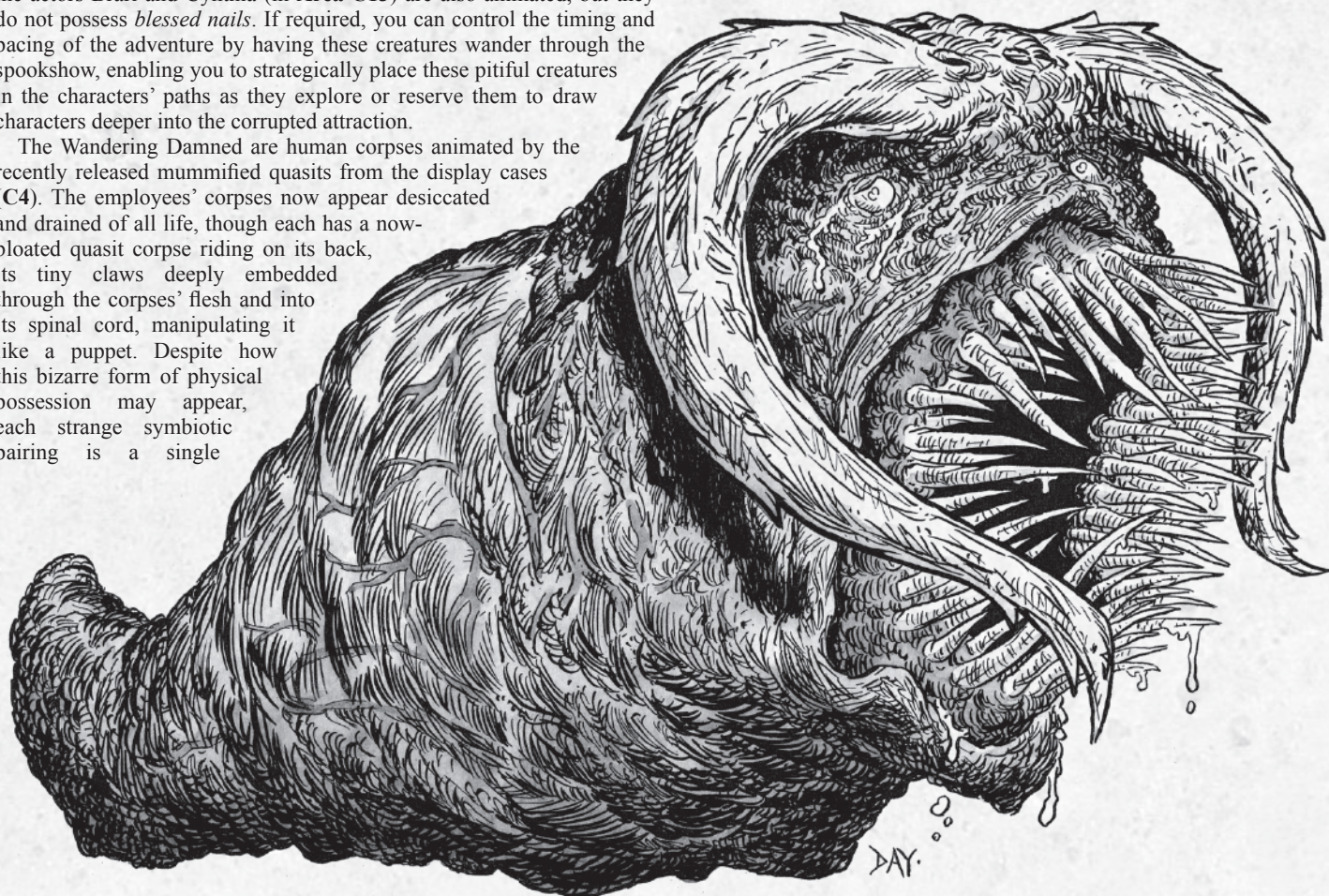
## Back of House

The service areas remain largely unaffected by the corruptive presence of the unsealed portal, and continue to click and whirl with the sounds of grating machinery and pumping bellows. As before, these cramped hallways are considered difficult terrain.

### C7. Lower Service Hallway

All manner of gears, levers, and bellows crowd this cramped service hallway.

The formerly concealed entrance to this area is knocked askew. This hallway provides access to the northeast corner where a *blessed nail* must be replaced. This nail is now in the possession of one of the wandering damned, however. Heavy machinery combining pneumatic and fleshy animated components blocks the east-to-west expanse of the northernmost corridor that leads to the northwest corner that once held the other *blessed nail*, but this corner is accessible via the ladder that



## THE BLIGHT: RICHARD PETT'S CROOKED CITY

descends from the upper service hallway (C9) or the secret panel in the Maze of Misery (C14).

### C8. Bedroom and Office

What might have once been merely a crowded and disorderly office is now a ransacked mess.

The bed, wash basin, and desk in this bedroom office have been overturned, and piles of pamphlets, papers, religious banners, and hanging holy symbols have been chaotically tossed about.

**Treasure:** Much of value remains here, however, including protective items that did Chelman no good when the portal awakened. A *detect magic* spell reveals several magic items stashed in the top desk drawer, including 2 *potions of fire resistance*, an *amulet against scrying*, a small statuette that is a *figurine of the onyx dog*, and a *wand of metal detection* (16 charges). The bottom drawer contains assorted papers and invoices, as well as a bound text containing the initiation rituals and practices of the *Fraternitatem Æternam*. Should the characters attempt to learn the ritual (a process that requires 4 weeks of study), the tome acts as an instructor eager to teach. In addition, a section in the tome reveals the details of *blessed nails* and their use by acolytes to disrupt open portals in the event of a mishap. This information clearly indicates to the characters that they must be replaced within 24 hours of the last one being removed to restore the ward.

A small locked strongbox contains 400gp; Chelman has the key.

### C9. Upper Service Hallway

Sputtering lanterns light the floor of this cramped service corridor, reflecting from the metallic litter of unwound springs and broken gears ejected from much of the machinery that crowds this hallway.

This corridor's flickering lanterns cast eerie shadows as the hallway's machinery and bellows continue to pump and whirl despite obvious damage. The cramped hallway remains difficult terrain. The **Wandering Damned** fiendish zombie of Mattie the mechanic roams this area. This zombie carries one of the *blessed nails*.

**Wandering Damned (Zombie) (Mattie):** HD 2; HP 12; AC 8[11]; Atk strike (1d8); Move 6; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 2/30; Special: immune to sleep and charm.

**Equipment:** *blessed nail*.

## Spookshow

### C10. Haunted Hellmouth

The open demonic mouth of the spookshow's entrance grimaces widely. The striped tunnel beyond the portal is no longer spinning in its previous maddening gyre, but rather abruptly jarring with a loud, repetitive *thunk*, as if stuck or jammed. Sulphurous fumes seem to be drawn in and then exhaled through the gaping jaw.

Though the Hellmouth tunnel no longer spins, it is not free of dangers. The interior decoration of the painted Faces of the Damned now gape and leer in a foul approximation of life in a disturbing and horrific animation caused by the abyssal presences that now haunt the theatre, creating a unique **trap**.

**Trap:** Grasping claws of demonic entities — previously mere macabre décor — now warp the tunnel's walls as they push through the fabric of reality to attack passing characters with magical energy. These claws attack as 2 HD creatures and do 1d4 points of damage. Claws can be destroyed by dealing 3hp damage.

### C11. Quasit Caves

While the hidden crucibles that light this chamber still cast its scorched plaster cliffs in a ruddy glow, the impish automatons that once sprang forth from every nook and crevice to surprise passersby now hang limply in mid-air, ejected from their hiding places but still tethered to their iron mounting rods, their miniature pitchforks dangling lifelessly from tiny mechanical claws.

The chamber's cave-like appearance has not changed, though the crucible's flames seem more enlivened — fiercer — while their shadows dance and play at the edges of the characters' vision with more animation than the licking flames seem to otherwise indicate. A secret door is concealed behind the rock façade near the room's exit that leads to the upper service hallway (C9).

Though their animating machinery in the upper service hallway (C9) was damaged by the warping Abyssal energies of the reawakened summoning circle, the very same energies have given new life to the quasit-like automatons, who clamber from their mounting brackets as 4 **impish idols** to attack the characters once they turn the room's corner.

**Impish Idols (Animated Objects) (4):** HD 1; HP 8, 6x2, 5; AC 7[12]; Atk fork (1d3); Move 9 (flying 9); Save 17; AL N; CL/XP 1/15; Special: none. (*Monstrosities* 13)

### C12. Bory Maelstrom

The scenes of an eroded shore on a black river have changed little in this room, though the room's glass floor covering the spinning vortex below is now covered in a slippery gore.

Creatures who enter the room may become subject to the maelstrom's vertigo effect (as described in A12 in Chapter 1). The apparatus here is not jammed by malfunctioning machinery, but rather part of a rotten foot and the stinking entrails of a hideously captured creature: the **Wandering Damned** corpse of Luther, the theatre host. The fiendish zombie of the unfortunate man is disgustingly macabre, one of his feet having been partially torn off and lodged in a seam in the floor's aperture, which has also twisted and stretched his entrails from his torso after having been caught in the floor's snapping mechanism. The zombie immediately moves to attack, but also remains partially immobilized by the floor trap, and as a result cannot leave the confines of the room due to the leash of stretched intestines. His mutilated corpse also serves as part of a **trap** as described below.

**Wandering Damned (Zombie) (4):** HD 2; HP 10; AC 8[11]; Atk strike (1d8); Move 6; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 2/30; Special: immune to sleep and charm.

**Equipment:** *blessed nail*.

**Trap:** Damaging the zombie partially releases the tension binding the malfunctioning aperture, and one of the panels of the aperture immediately snaps open. There is a 25% chance per attack that any character in the room is standing on a panel that abruptly opens beneath them. As before, characters can avoid this fate and leap to the edge with a successful saving throw (anyone standing in a corner of the room gains a +2 on their save, as the iris only partially reaches them). Characters who fall take 1d6 points of damage from the 10ft drop.

## C13. Corpse Pit

The flickering light of an askew light reflector creates a strange strobe effect in this chamber, as unearthly shadows dance and play on the plastered-rock walls like an insane children's magic lantern.

The gory maelstrom aperture (C12) dumps characters into this dimly lit, cave-like chamber. Its previous ghostly projection is now malfunctioning, the projector flickering with its disorienting, strobe. The thick cushions that normally break patrons' falls remain pushed aside and now smoulder with a foul stench. A thick haze of smoke makes the flickering light even more disturbing. The room's exit is open. The zombies of the actors Brarl and Cynthia emerge through the smoke and lights as **2 Wandering Damned** to attack any who arrive in this chamber, while a sabotaged **trap** from the previous visit remains, but in an even deadlier form.

**Wandering Damned (Zombie) (4):** HD 2; HP 15, 13; AC 8[11]; Atk strike (1d8); Move 6; Save 16; AL N; CL/XP 2/30; **Special:** immune to sleep and charm.

**Trap:** In addition to the threat of the zombies, the formerly sabotaged flame jets are still in operation here, never having been corrected by the theatre employees, and rekindled if the characters disabled it. Any creature moving adjacent to the back wall triggers the trap, which is now enhanced by Abyssal energies. The flames target any creatures within 15ft of the west wall for 2d4 points of damage (save for half).

## C14. Maze of Misery

The mirrors of this reflective maze are now warped and bowed, as if half-melted by some hellish heat.

The closer the characters get to Darmathon's Domicile (C16), the more the demon's wretched influence warps the original design and intent of the spookshow. This is no more obvious than here in the mirror maze, where the viewer's tortured reflections now carry real consequences. As before, the maze is difficult to navigate, but the room's warped machinery has made this endeavour somewhat easier, as many of the shifting floor plates and swinging panels are stuck in place. Traversing the room now takes 1d6+2 rounds. The effects of the various mirrors, however, are no longer mere lighting and mechanical tricks, but debilitating consequences of the nearby Abyssal influence. Each round spent in the chamber, a character experiences the effects of one of the shifting mirrors that the maze places in front of him. See the sidebox for details.

The distortion of the mirror maze has fully exposed the secret panel leading into the lower service hallway (C7), an area characters need to enter in order to replace the *blessed nails* and shut down Darmathon's portal.

## C15. Prison of the Damned

Extreme heat seems to have melted the walls and displays of this chamber; the wire framework and clockwork mechanics of the boulders that once stood here are now exposed in scorched, jumbled, and half-melted piles. The silver tracings of the visible half of the summoning circle arcs across the floor, and the exit lift beckons from beyond.

The former locations of the mechanical boulders here are now little more than tangled wire and levers, and those areas are considered rough terrain. Due to the thick smoke leaking from the room's portal, the visibility in this

## Hazards of the Maze of Misery

One of the following effects occurs each round in the shifting mirrors that the maze places in front of any characters that are in the maze that round. The effects of these mirrors only affect a single character in any group viewing them (determine the affected character randomly). If the characters split into multiple groups within the maze, then one effect occurs each round per group (again, only one character is affected per group). Roll 1d6 each round, rerolling any previously obtained result.

1d6	Result
1	A cackling demonic automaton draws back a hammer and seems to shatter the mirror, cracking the viewer's reflections into a thousand pieces. The viewer must make a saving throw or suffer a -2 penalty on saving throws for 10 minutes from the temporary damage to his psyche.
2	Small winged quasits tug and pull on the four corners of this mirror, horrifically stretching the subject's reflection. The viewer is weakened (-2 to hit and damage) for 1d4 minutes and his movement is halved for the same duration.
3	Skeletal demons animate and claw at the subject's reflection, which begins to rot and deteriorate to a skeletal remnant of itself as flames rise to lick the subject's feet. The viewer must succeed on a saving throw or become paralyzed for 1d6 rounds. A paralyzed subject exudes a carrion stench that causes all living creatures in a 10ft-radius spread who fail a saving throw to become sickened for as long as the subject remains paralyzed (-1 to hit and saves).
4	Two automated imps turn a large crank, tortuously compressing the subject's reflection, which lets out a powerful scream audible only to the reflected creatures. The target creature must make a saving throw or take 1d4 points of damage and be deafened for 1d4 rounds.
5	A ruddy hue halos the viewer's reflection before its image bursts into violent flames, melting his flesh. The viewer takes 2d4 points of fire damage and catches fire (save for half and to avoid catching fire). If the reflected subject is set alight, creatures within 5ft must each make a saving throw or take 1d4 points of fire damage. The flames enshrouding the original target can be extinguished.
6	Chittering, demonic skulls set in a frame gape and leer at the subject, whose reflection grows increasingly demonic in appearance. The viewer must make a saving or be affected by a <i>fear</i> spell. While under the spell's effect, the viewer takes on the reflected demonic appearance.

room is limited, obscuring all sight beyond 5ft and granting creatures in the smoke a +1 armor class bonus.

From the gloom lurches the broken form of the demon-warped Chelman, the proprietor of the theatre. Unlike the zombies of his former employees, Chelman's death at Darmathon's hands caused a brutal transfiguration within the confines of the summoning circle. His legs have

# Concluding the Adventure

been torn off below the knees, and his limp and broken body is bloated like a waterlogged corpse, infused with a viscous, writhing black tar that oozes from every wound. The final *blessed nail* that the characters need to shut down the Theatre Infernalis' portal is plunged squarely in an oozing and smouldering wound in the crown of the pathetic creature's head. Before revealing itself, the demon-warped creature unleashes its stinking cloud ability to add to the concealment, then lurches toward the characters to attack, focusing on those affected by the nausea of its stinking cloud (which lasts 2 rounds).

**Chelman (Dretch Demon):** HD 4; HP 26; AC 2[17]; Atk 2 claws (1d4), bite (1d6); Move 9; Save 13; AL C; CL/XP 6/400; **Special:** magical abilities, summon rats (1d4), stinking cloud (20ft radius, save or helpless with nausea for 1d4+1 rounds). (**Monstrosities** 92)

**Magical abilities:** 1/day—*teleport*, *darkness* 5ft radius.

**Development:** As characters deal with the threat of a transformed Chelman, Darmathon watches carefully from the disabled lift (C16), waiting for the right moment to strike.

## C16. Darmathon's Domicile

The lift shudders in place as its frozen gears continue their fruitless attempts to raise it. Its rib bone gate is closed, and its abrupt jerking motions make it appear as the laughing belly of some giant skeletal beast.

After decades trapped between worlds, the once-mighty demon Darmathon is now a mere figment of its former self, robbed of power and diminished in form but awash in the infernal energies issuing from the reopened portal, slowly festering with hate and bile. Originally a greater ooze demon, Darmathon's ignoble captivity reduced him to the status of a **lesser ooze demon**, and he has lost his ability to summon other demons.

**Darmathon (Lesser Ooze Demon):** HD 4; HP 28; AC 4[15]; Atk slam (1d6) or bite (1d6 plus 1d4 acid) and 2 claws (1d4 plus 1d4 acid); Move 6; Save 13; AL C; CL/XP 6/400; **Special:** acid (dissolves flesh), immunities (acid, poison), resist (acid, cold, fire) (50%). (**The Tome of Horrors Complete** 150)

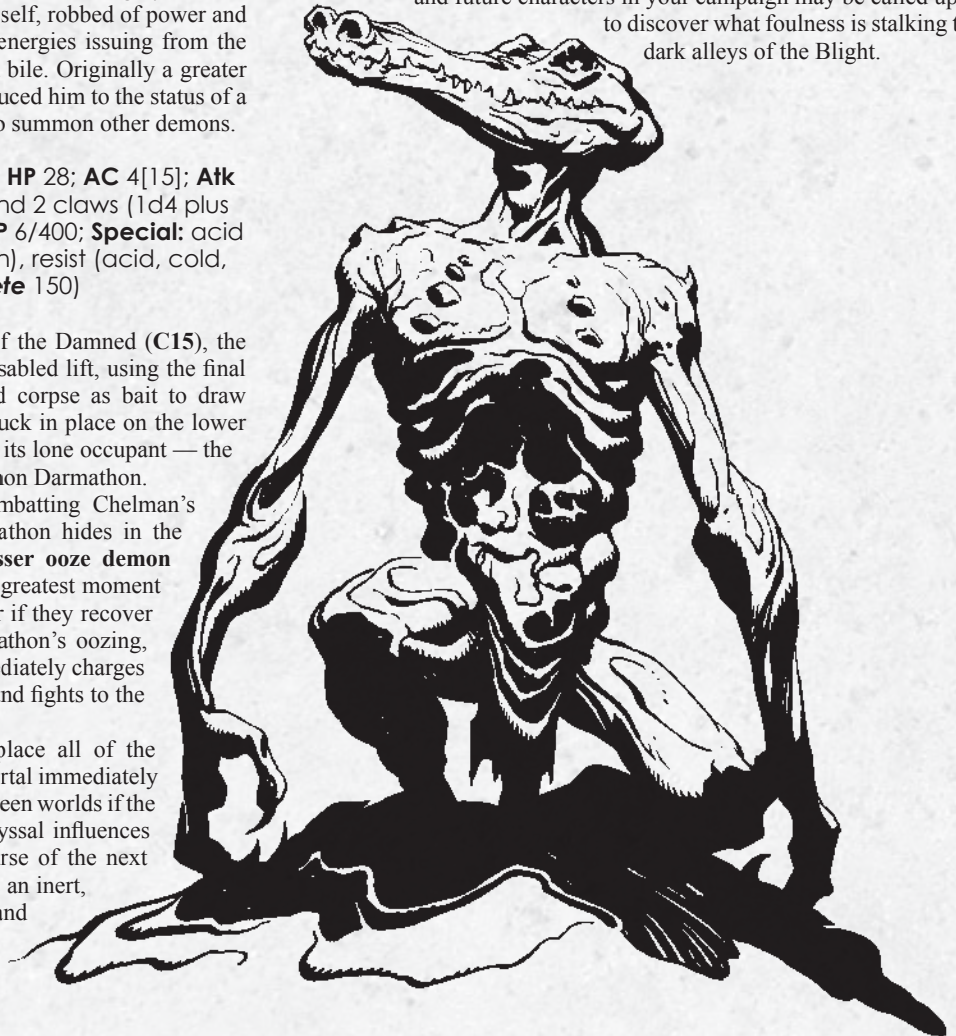
**Tactics:** When characters enter the Prison of the Damned (C15), the demon hides in the darkness of the adjacent disabled lift, using the final *blessed nail* lodged in Chelman's transformed corpse as bait to draw the characters in closer. This lift is currently stuck in place on the lower level, its shuttering cage a shadowed retreat for its lone occupant — the malformed and weakened body of the ooze demon Darmathon.

While characters are preoccupied with combatting Chelman's infernal form in the adjacent chamber, Darmathon hides in the shadows here, watching and waiting. The **lesser ooze demon** waits until the characters appear in either their greatest moment of desperation or on the verge of triumph — or if they recover the *nail* from Chelman's tortured body. Darmathon's oozing, blackened, vaguely crocodilian form then immediately charges the nearest opponent from his hidden location and fights to the bitter end.

**Development:** If characters manage to replace all of the *blessed nails* in the theatre's four corners, the portal immediately snaps shut, once again trapping Darmathon between worlds if the demon has not already been defeated. The Abyssal influences on the theatre's trappings persist over the course of the next week or so until the Theatre Infernalis becomes an inert, ruined shell no longer full of nervous laughter and frightful screams.

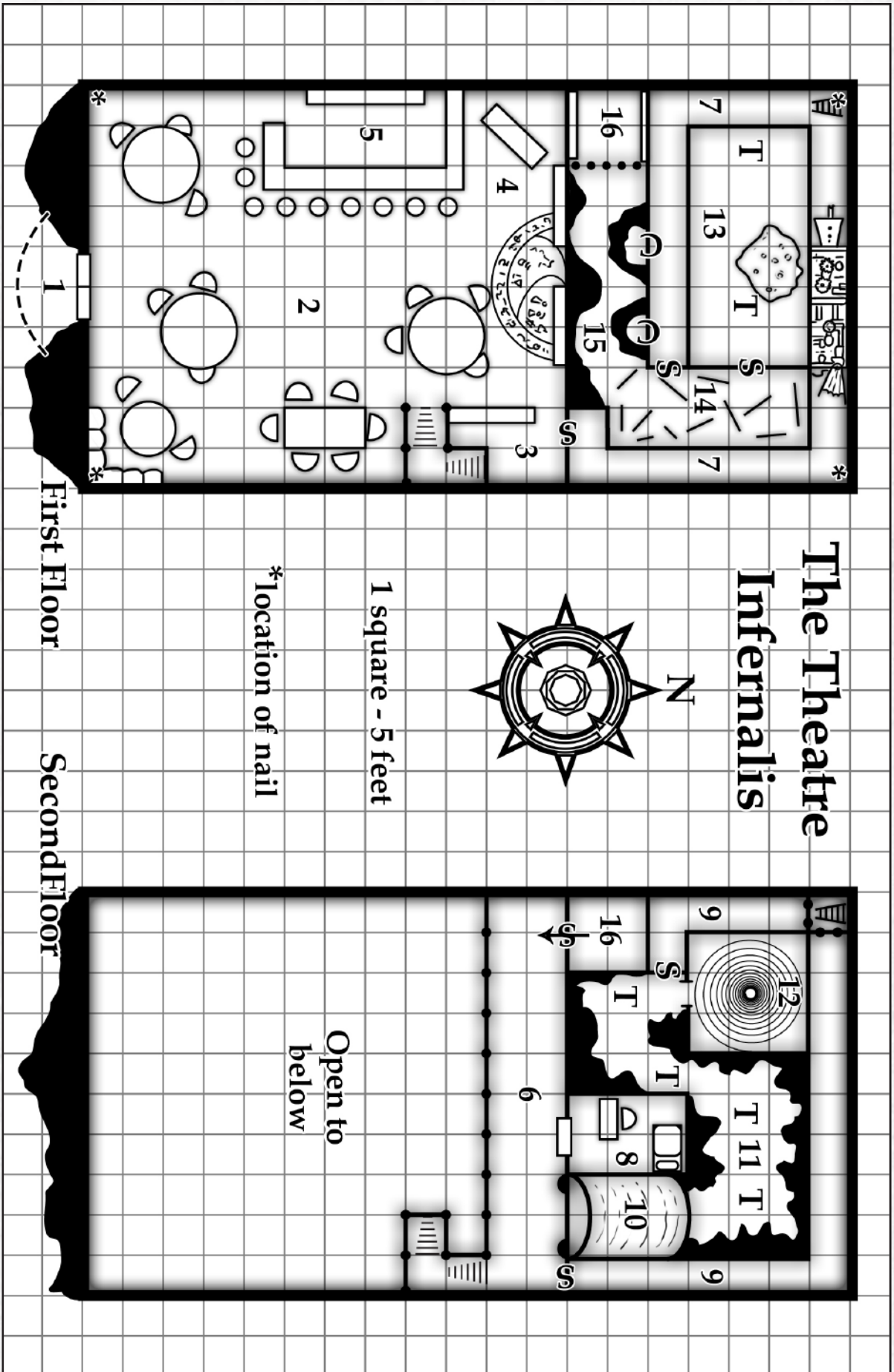
The characters have experienced the finale of the Theatre Infernalis' long tenure in Castorhage. If Darmathon is destroyed, the open portal still poses a threat, particularly from inquisitive quasits and worse that leak forth to explore the mortal realm over the course of subsequent weeks. Replacing all of the theatre's *blessed nails* prevents this, though if removed once more by vandals or vagrants, the problem may again arise. The theatre itself, its property contested and unclaimed, lies vacant for some time, its gaping façade daring others to enter and explore. And indeed, if the *nails* are disturbed, the location may come to house more accumulated Abyssal threats — slowly at first, but with increasing frequency — and become a source for new adventure in the future. But eventually, and quietly, the already decrepit theatre will be found mysteriously burned and thereafter razed, and its property claimed by new powers, a final act that removes the foul stain of the Fraternitatem Æternam's old infernal injustices with it.

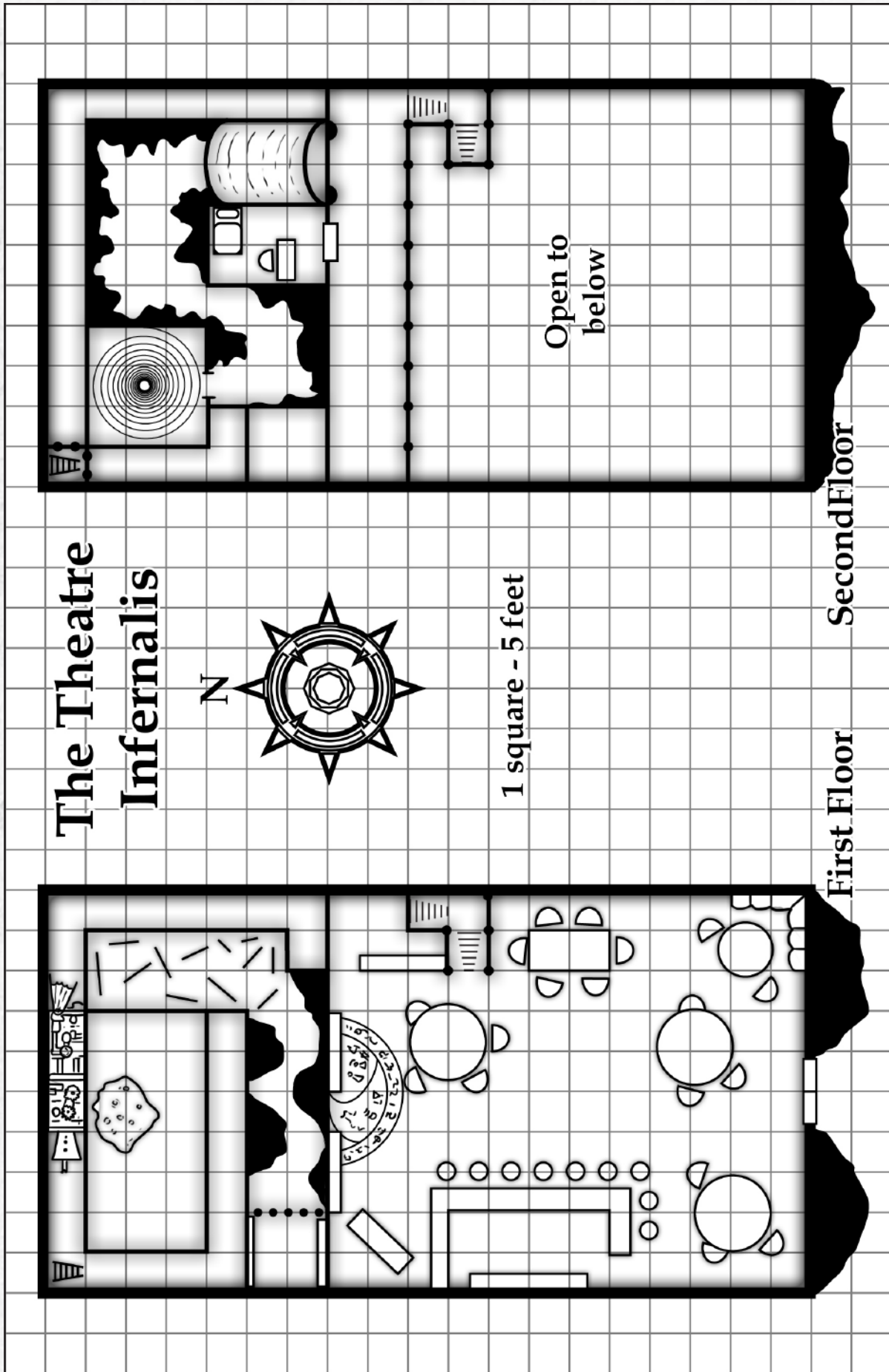
If the characters fail to destroy Darmathon, the creature gains 1 HD per day until he regains his former terrifying stature as a greater ooze demon (see **The Tome of Horrors Complete** 150) over the course of the next week, at which point he permanently breaks free of the portal's influence. If left unchecked, the demon sloughs his oily bulk from the ruined theatre once he regains his full form and escapes onto the dark sewers of Castorhage. He continues to grow in power and influence, and may once again rise to threaten those within the city. Members of important families may find themselves targeted by the vengeful creature for their blood relation to deceased Fraternitatem Æternam members who originally imprisoned it, and future characters in your campaign may be called upon to discover what foulness is stalking the dark alleys of the Blight.



THE CROOKED NAIL

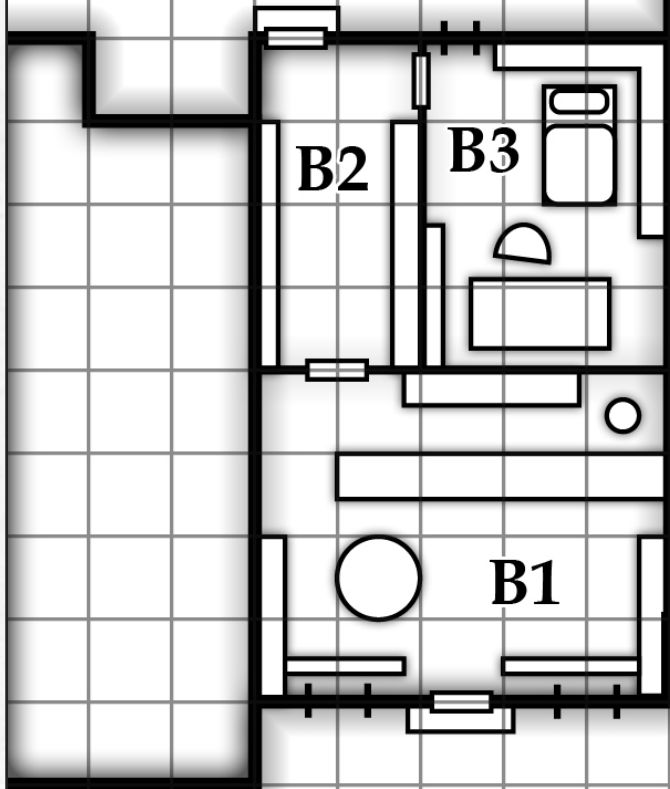




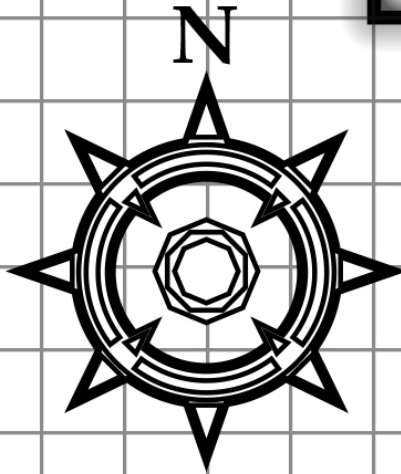


# Crux's Apothecary

Alley



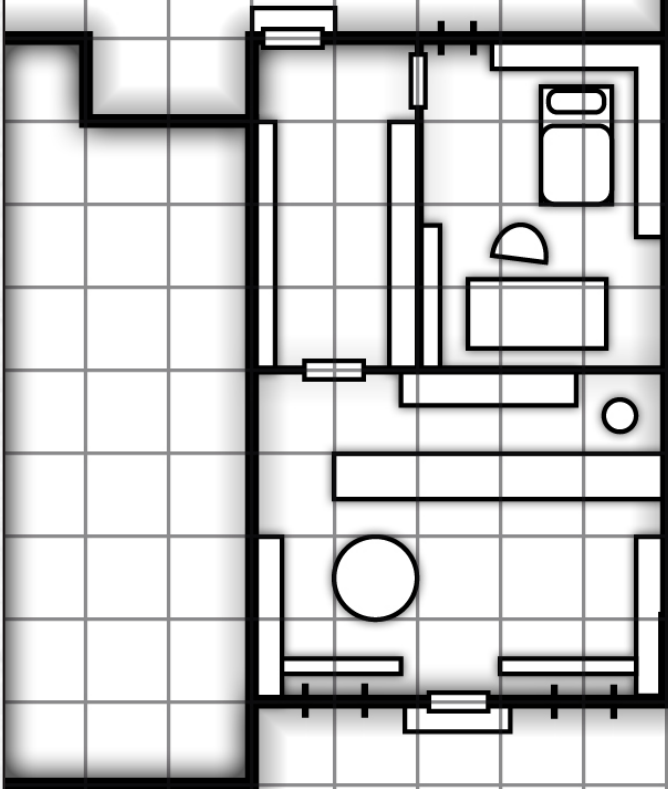
Renfield Lane



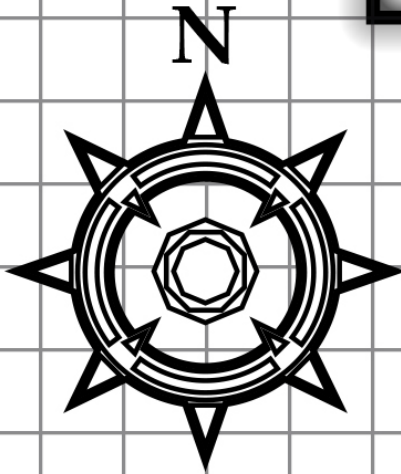
1 square - 5 feet

# Crux's Apothecary

Alley



Renfield Lane



1 square - 5 feet

## THE BLIGHT: RICHARD PETT'S CROOKED CITY

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# The Blight

Richard Pett's Crooked City

## EB1: The Crooked Nail

For decades, Theatre Infernalis offered shocking and frightful entertainment to customers who entered its gaping demonic façade and saw a frightful portrait of the eternal torments that await all sinners. Now rumours tell of the aging and supposedly-cursed proprietor's deteriorating health and the theatre's impending sale, and the Artists' Quarter has been abuzz with those seeking one final fright with a walk through the crucible-licked walls of the infernal house of the macabre before its final curtain call. But are the theatre's smoke-and-mirrors and cheap scares hiding a truly wicked secret? What is the nature of the curse and illness that afflict the owner? And did foul and profane rites once take place between its walls that outside forces now seek to exploit? What happens when the spookshow's fun and games transform into a terrifying reality, threatening to spill forth an infernal malevolence onto the streets of the Blight?

*The Crooked Nail* is a stand-alone introductory adventure set in **The Blight** for 4–6 1st-level characters.



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