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20 THINGS #45:
VAMPIRE'S CASTLE



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20 THINGS #45: VAMPIRE'S CASTLE

Are you a busy GM? Does session prep take too long? Do you never have time to work on the cool little details that can bring your session to life? Well fear not! That's where the 20 Things line comes in. This supplement gives you, the time-crunched GM, the tools to effortlessly add verisimilitude and detail to your adventure. Use the material herein either before or during play and bask in your players' adulation.

This instalment provides five tables compatible with virtually any fantasy roleplaying game and is designed to help you to flesh out and bring to life a vampire's castle.

CREDITS

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FOREWORD

Welcome to this Raging Swan Press System Neutral Edition supplement. Herein you'll find evocative, inspiring text designed to help you—the busy GM—run better, quicker and easier games.

This book is compatible with most fantasy roleplaying games. It's impossible to create a truly system neutral book, though, and some generic game terms—wizard, fighter, human, elf and so on—lurk within. These generic terms are easily modified to the GM's system of choice.

One special note about the NPCs in this supplement. While some are magic-users, fighters, clerics and so on, others are simply normal folk. Because different game systems handle normal folk differently we've made no attempt to note their "class" leaving them simply as "female human" and so on.

USING THIS BOOK

You can use these tables either during session prep or "on the fly" during the actual session. Roll on the desired table and describe the result. Remember:

- Some players may assume because you describe something it is important. This may slow down the party's progress through the adventure. This isn't necessarily a bad thing.
- Modify any result so it fit with your game.
- Ignore or re-roll inappropriate results.
- Have fun!

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1: OUTSIDE THE VAMPIRE'S CASTLE

Steeped in evil, a vampire's castle is a foul, terrifying place. However, the vampire's fell influence is not always kept in check by the castle's stout walls. A powerful vampire's influence seeps into the surround area like a poison.

Use the list below, to describe features of note or interest in the castle's surrounds.

1. The land surrounding the castle is a bleak place; plants appear warped and stunted, and there is an obvious lack of wildlife. Elves, druids and rangers automatically sense the oddness and imbalance of the locality.
2. A huge ghost-white owl perches high up in the leafless branches of a gnarled oak tree. It stares unblinkingly at the party, before silently taking flight.
3. The decomposing corpse of a peasant slumps against a tree's gnarled trunk. The unfortunate appears to be the victim of a frenzied attack—his body has literally been ripped apart by a creature of great strength.
4. Black clouds hang over the castle and its surrounds, throwing the whole place into a deep gloom. Under the cloud, the wind doesn't blow and only the faintest breeze disturbs the tree's leafless branches. It is surprisingly cold, in the castle's immediate environs.
5. The road leading to the castle is overgrown. Thick weeds and noisome bramble bushes cluster thickly against the trail. A character well-versed in tracking can easily determine this road does not see much traffic—which is surprising as the castle's occupants must require frequent deliveries of supplies and the like.
6. Observant characters note a strange characteristic of the trees and shrubs growing near the castle. The branches and leaves growing on the side closest to the castle are shrivelled and mis-coloured, while those growing on their other sides are comparatively normal (if unhealthy).
7. The mouldering corpse of a hanged man dangles from a stout tree branch. The rope creaks as the corpse sways slowly in the breeze. A crude sign hangs around the man's neck; it reads, "Consort of Fiends".
8. Light fog perpetually cloaks the ground surrounding the castle. The fog always seems to grow thicker at night, blanketing the castle in a white, wet blanket. The fog deadens sounds and moves and twists in bizarre and disturbing ways. Only the midday sun is strong enough to burn away the night's accumulation of fog.
9. Thick fields of glutinous mud extend away from the castle in all directions. The remains of dry stone walls, mud-filled ditches and the like show where farming was once practiced. Clearly, no crops have grown here for years.
10. The white bones of a large horse—perhaps even a warhorse—lies sprawled in the undergrowth by the road amid rotting scraps of its bit, bridle and saddle. Thick growths of weeds and brambles curl upwards and through the skeletal remains.
11. The castle throws deep, strangely elongated, shadows over the surrounds. Some of the shadows form disturbing shapes which bear no resemblance to the castle's outline.
12. A gigantic stone pillar looms over the road. Carved into a bewildering array of twisted, horrible shapes the column's centrepiece is a carved image of the vampire's heraldic device. No weeds, brambles or briars grow near the pillar—it is a hateful thing.



2: INSIDE THE VAMPIRE'S CASTLE

The passageways and chambers of a vampire's castle are a terrifying place. Even if they are not drenched in gore and littered with the corpses of the vampire's many victims a sense of dread and doom hangs over the place. Such a place is as terrifying as any lich's lair.

Use the lists below, to add flavour and detail to the chambers and passages in a vampire's castle.

PRESENTABLE LOCATIONS

If the vampire keeps their undead status a secret much of the castle may be in a presentable, "normal" state. Subtle clues, however, may abound for the astute visitor.

1. A thick, faded rug covers part of the floor. Wear-marks on the rug show this to be a high traffic area. Characters looking under the rug discover a large, dried bloodstain on the floor.
2. A lone bat roosts high up in a dark corner of the passageway or chamber. Light—such as that thrown by a torch or *light* spell startles the bat; it flutters madly around the area for a few seconds before darting out the nearest window or arrow slit.
3. Perceptive characters notice a faint imprint of a bloody palm print near a window. Characters investigating this discovery realise the bloodstain was left by someone climbing into the room from outside.
4. The portraits hanging on the walls are old and faded. The folk in the pictures wear grim looks on their faces and antiquated clothes. Cobwebs cluster thickly about the portraits' frames. No obviously new portraits hang on the walls.
5. After spending some time exploring the castle, a perceptive character notices the complete lack of religious paraphernalia or mirrors in any of the castle's public areas. The castle's chapel is dusty and unused.
6. At night, the castle's interior is poorly lit. Many of the castle's torch sconces are empty, and those actually equipped with torches invariably gutter out during the night. Thus, deep pools of darkness fill many of the castle's passageways, staircases and chambers—a perfect hunting ground for a hungry vampire.
7. The doors warding many of the castle's guest chambers are equipped with comparatively new and complex locks. Strangely, most of the locks have no keys in them. A close examination of these locks reveals a hidden mechanism on the outside of the door that unlocks the doors without need of its key.
8. The castle is seemingly free of vermin; the rats normally present in such locales are nowhere to be seen (the vampire uses his powers to keep them in check). The castle also has no cats or dogs, and comparatively few horses.
9. Dusty, once fine, tapestries hang on the walls. Each depicts a key scene in the family's history—the first of the family line being ennobled, a heroic victory in battle and the like.

10. A dark, shadow-filled alcove holds a dusty display of a suit of plate armour along with several weapons including a spear, morningstar and longsword. The armour clutches the spear while the other two weapons are pinned to the wall. Paranoid character may suspect the armour and weapons to be animate guardians...and they very well might be!

GORE-SPLATTERED LOCATIONS

Some vampires do not bother to hide their nature, and their castles are a testimony to their evil, depravity and unending thirst.

1. The pallid, bloodless corpse of a naked human man lies sprawled on the floor. Although the corpse is partially decomposed, a score or more bite marks are evident all over the body.
2. An impressive spray of dried arterial blood decorates one wall and ceiling. Characters investigating the spray notice disturbing marks in the dried blood that suggest someone—or something—licked some of the blood up.
3. A ripped and smashed picture hangs drunkenly on the wall, its frame splintered. The picture's remains depict the vampire as it was in life.
4. Graffiti, scratched into the floor (perhaps with a dagger or similar) reads, "Despair. The castle's master is a devil."
5. Jagged fragments of a wooden stake lie scattered about the floor. Dried blood coats the stake's tip.
6. The skeletal remains of some unfortunate lies heaped in a corner. A character wise in the healing arts who examines the remains notices deep gouge marks on some of the person's neck bones.
7. A twisted, partially crushed silver holy symbol of a good-aligned faith lies on the floor against a wall. A chip in the stone above suggests it was hurled against the wall with considerable force.
8. Chilly, brooding darkness fills this area. Sensitive (or paranoid) characters detect a sense of lurking, malignant menace in the dark. Investigation suggests the cold air seems to be issuing upwards through many small cracks in the floor.
9. Dust cloaks the floor and cobwebs hang from the ceiling so low they brush over the faces of those exploring the area. Careful searching reveals the faint outlines of tracks in the dust created by someone running. It is impossible to tell how long ago the tracks were made.
10. A gentle breeze—perhaps from a cracked window or arrow slit—occasionally blows through this area stirring up the dust herein into short-lived dust devils. (This could work in the party's favour as the dancing dust could reveal a hiding or invisible enemy just before it strikes).

3: THE VAMPIRE'S SERVANTS

Most vampires require living servants to do their bidding. From venturing abroad during daylight hours to lulling the vampire's visitors into a false (and fatal) sense of complacency such folk buy their lives with their unfailing fealty.

Use the folk below, to portray the vampire's minions.

1: ARIQUIS GAROTHYN

NE male half-elf fighter 2/thief 2

Ruggedly handsome in a rough sort of way, this black-haired half-elf carries himself with vigour and confidence.

Ariquis willingly serves his master and carries out all manner of depravities and the like in his name. One of the vampire's most trusted (and presentable) servants Ariquis often wanders the surrounding countryside or visits nearby towns and villages in search of victims for his master.

Personality: Depraved and lecherous before he fell under the vampire's influence Ariquis exults in indulging his darkest fantasies on those falling into his clutches. He is also a bully, and terrifies his victims with descriptions of what his master will do to them.

Mannerisms: Ariquis has an unsettling steady stare; he doesn't blink—ever.

Unique Treasures: Ariquis loves taking small trinkets from his victims. Most such objects are nearly worthless rings, earrings and the like. One chunky golden ring in his possession, however, has a hinged compartment that can hold a powder or poison.

Hook: In defeat, Ariquis is pathetic. If badly injured, he throws himself to the floor and begs for mercy. He spins a tale of the vampire corrupting him and (again) begs for a second chance. He is lying, and reverts to his old self—or attempts escape—at the earliest opportunity.



2: CALADAL NACKLE

CN (NE) old female gnome

With an expression veering between exhausted and petrified this tiny old gnomish woman seems on the verge of complete collapse.

Caladal has served the vampire for decades—perhaps even a century or more; she's not sure anymore as the long days and longer nights have blurred into one. She accepts her lot and knows she will soon die—it is only a matter of time before her master, or one of his favoured servants, ends her miserable existence; she just hopes she does not join the undead's ranks.

Personality: Utterly terrified by her master Caladal's spirit has been crushed through long decades of service. Once a wild spirit, she has been broken and has begun to slide into evil and extreme selfishness. She just wants to survive as long as possible and will sacrifice anything (and anyone) to achieve her goal.

Mannerisms: Sudden movements terrify Caladal and she cowers away from them. She often sighs deeply.

Unique Treasures: Caladal has collected an amazing array of odds and ends during her long service. Before she lost her hope, she even stole several silver vials each holding precious holy water from the vampire's various victims.

Hook: Caladal sees the characters as her possible salvation. Too scared to move openly against her lord, she surreptitiously helps intruders in any way she can—perhaps by leaving one of her precious vials of holy water where they will find it.

3: HENK

CE male half-orc thief 4

Mostly bald, and shockingly ugly, this chubby half-orc has a look of dim-witted ignorance about his piggy face.

Henk loves serving his master because sometimes he gets to indulge his most deviant passion—cannibalism. Once his master has finished with his victims, Henk drags the corpse away to feast on its juicy, tender flesh.

Personality: Utterly without morals, a sense of mercy or any real empathy Henk is a perfect servant for the vampire.

Mannerisms: When looking at a living person, Henk often can't help licking his lips in a very suggestive, perhaps disturbing, fashion. Perceptive observers may note he's filed his teeth into particularly sharp points.

Unique Treasures: Henk has collected many overlooked trinkets from his countless victims. If the characters are looking for a particular person, chances are Henk possesses a distinct piece of jewellery that hints at their fate. In particular, he possesses several golden picture lockets which hold tiny portraits of their previous owners' loved ones.

Hook: Most odious of the vampire's servants, Henk's chambers are a charnel house. Characters reaching his rooms will be under no illusions as to the depths of his depravities. Henk doesn't see what's wrong with his practises—his meals were dead, after all, by the time he got to them.

4: THE VAMPIRE'S "GUESTS"

Vampires require a steady supply of blood to slake their unholy, unending thirst. A vampire's castle inevitably holds a number of guests or prisoners who unwilling (and perhaps unwittingly) participate in the vampire's nocturnal feasts. Such folk could be unwitting guest or prisoners languishing in the place's dungeons.

Use the folk below, to portray the vampire's "guests".

1: HANNU ESKOLA

LN middle-aged male human

Tall, slender and partially bald this stooped man keeps his gaze downcast toward the floor.

Hannu came to the castle to investigate a debt owed to his master by one of the castle's occupants (perhaps even the vampire itself). He's convinced it's the worst thing he has ever done.

Personality: Terrified and desperate to escape, Hannu latches onto anyone who seems to know what they are doing. He dreams of returning home, and never leaving again.

Mannerisms: Hannu stutters and has—very recently—developed an inability to look anyone in the eye.

Unique Treasures: Although he has lost most of his possessions, Hannu has managed to hide a small leather folder in his chamber which includes a summary and legal document setting out the debt owed to his master. This might include details of the debt's forfeiture clause—perhaps even a transfer of the castle's deeds!

Hook: Hannu offers to introduce the characters to his master and to give a favourable account of their exploits if they free him from the castle. His patron could be the source of future quests, for the party.

2: MIKKO LEINO

CN male human fighter 2

Clad in a rusty, battered suit of chainmail this tall, wiry man has the look of a caged wolf about him.

Mikko strayed too close to the castle with his bandit fellows. In the desperate fight that followed his companions were slaughtered but, for some unknown reason, he was spared.

Personality: Outwardly brash, brave and full of youth's bravado Mikko talks much about what he's going to do to his jailer if the vampire should ever fall into his clutches. In truth, Mikko is an excellent actor and has come to realise he is doomed unless he can escape. Not big on preparation, "We rush in and slay them all" is the height of his tactical thinking.

Mannerisms: Mikko talks loudly, but does not have an extensive vocabulary. He uses short, simple words and grows angry if he does not understand what other people are on about.

Unique Treasures: Mikko knows the location of the bandits' buried treasure hoard (such as it is) and offers to share it with the characters if they help him escape. He overstates the value of the hoard to entice the characters into helping him.

Hook: Although outwardly brash, Mikko craves a guide and mentor. He latches onto the most charismatic warrior-type in the group and positions himself as that person's loyal retainer.

3: SONJA KETO

LG female human cleric 1

Beautiful, but with a haunted, worried look on her face, this woman wears grubby, blood-spattered priestly vestments.

Sonja has been at the castle for six months. The vampire has discovered her blood is the best he has ever tasted—thus, he keeps Sonja around in the same way a wine collector carefully stores a fine vintage.

Personality: Friendly, but obviously nervous (or perhaps hiding something), Sonja is traumatised by her experiences in the castle. She has developed a deep distrust of anyone she meets and worries constantly about the vampire's unnaturally deep connection with her.

Mannerisms: Sonja's body language screams of her defensive attitude. She often seems on the verge of flight. She avoids areas of shadow wherever possible. Darkness terrifies her and she is never without a lit lantern or candle.

Unique Treasures: Strangely the vampire has permitted Sonja to keep her silver symbol, but has forced her to scratch his name on the back.

Hook: Because he loves the taste of her blood so much, the vampire takes extraordinary steps to keep Sonja safe and in his clutches. Paranoid or suspicious characters may suspect some other motivation guides the vampire's actions.



5: TREASURES, TRINKETS & TRASH

Over the long years of their existence, vampires accumulate many treasures and trinkets dropped by, or taken from, their many victims. Such items may lie unwanted where they fell or appear incongruous and out of place to an alert visitor.

Use the lists below, to determine what the characters find while in a vampire's castle.

TREASURES

Some items found in the vampire's castle have actual value.

1. This beautiful gold, gem-encrusted holy symbol hangs by a silver chain from a dusty, empty torch sconce. If the party carry lights, the gems glimmer at their approach; otherwise only perceptive characters notice this treasure. The holy symbol is worth 100 gp.
2. A skeletal hand lies behind a piece of furniture. Two gold rings yet encircle two of its fingers. Each ring is worth 20 gp and one bears a noble family's heraldic device.
3. Of cut crystal, this wine decanter stands next to two delicate matching wine glasses. The decanter, and one of the wine glasses, has a suspicious reddish-brown stain. The remains of another broken wine glass lies nearby. The set is worth 50 gp.
4. This black fur cloak is luscious, thick and warm. The pelt of a gigantic wolf the cloak is a thing of rare craftsmanship. It is worth 150 gp, and of high enough quality to potentially be used in the crafting of a magical item.
5. This beautifully wrought golden quill has a special fitting which allows new nibs to be inserted. It is worth 75 gp.
6. A small black velvet bag contains a silver brush and comb set suitable for use by a noblewoman. The set is worth 25 gp.
7. This small crystal vial blown into the shape of a rearing unicorn is half full with expensive perfume. It is worth 20 gp.
8. The engraving of a beautiful elfin woman—a siren—decorates this platinum whistle which hangs from a plain leather thong.
9. This beautiful silver dagger has a red ruby set in its pommel and nestles in a beautifully soft leather scabbard. An outline of the dagger is stitched into the scabbard in red thread. As a set, the dagger and scabbard are worth 600 gp.
10. A bag contains worn golden coins. Each coin has the vampire's family crest on one side and a stylised engraving of the castle on the other.

TRINKETS

Some items found in the vampire's castle have little value, but may provide hints to the fate (and identity) of the vampire's victims.

1. Crushed and broken this fragment of a silver holy symbol once represented a blazing sun. Its remnant is worth 5 gp as scrap metal.
2. This ornate hooded lantern is shaped like a perched owl—its wings can be opened to reveal the light inside. The lantern is a bit battered, but otherwise serviceable.

3. A fragment of delicate silver chain—the remains of a necklace—is tarnished and dirty. It is worth 4 gp.
4. A broken brass magnifying glass lies amid the shards of its lens. The remains are worth 2 gp.
5. A scrap of water-damaged map reveals some of the details of the area surrounding the castle. The map was accurate, but might be out of date.
6. The torn remnant of a bloodstained white silk robe flutters gently in the breeze. Paranoid characters might think it is a ghost or spectre.
7. An ornate cast iron key lies discarded on the floor. Judging by its size, it opens a chest or strongbox.
8. A dusty circle—perhaps a protective circle—of silver coins decorates the floor. Another two silver coins are balanced on the next door handle the characters find.
9. A damaged silver pendant shaped like three arrows hangs from a torn leather thing. The arrows' tips are missing.
10. The remains of a thieves' toolkit is scattered about the area.

TRASH

The vampire's depredations has no doubt resulted in much broken equipment, consumed magic items, destroyed holy symbols and the like.

1. Wooden fragments of a simple holy symbol litter the floor.
2. This empty potion vial is partially crushed as if someone had stood on it. The nearby floor is slightly discoloured.
3. The hilt of a dagger lies on the floor. Nearby a few shards of silver litter the floor.
4. A broken wine bottle—its label hopelessly faded—lies on the floor. Shards of brown glass lie scattered about the surrounding floor; some have been crushed underfoot and are little more than splinters of glass.
5. A bent crowbar lies on the floor in front of a door. Examination reveals pry marks around the door's lock.
6. A few wind-blown leaves lie in front of an open or broken window. Mottled brownish-green mould grows on the leaves and has begun to colonise the nearby floor and wall.
7. A badly dented hammer lies next to the jagged shard of a broken sword blade.
8. An arrow juts proud from a window frame. It looks like whoever shot the arrow was shooting at something climbing through the window. (This might be an important clue if the characters have not realised a vampire is in residence).
9. Drips of wax mar the floor. A perceptive character—or someone good at tracking—can follow the wax drips, which might lead to a secret compartment, hitherto unexplored part of the castle or similar. Small drops of dried blood lie next to some of the dripped wax.
10. An improvised wooden stake—clearly once a table leg—lies on against one wall. A bloody handprint mars one end of the stake; the other is free of any such stain.

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