



MODERN

ANYTHING GOES



By Owen K. C. Stephens

A Short d20 Modern Adventure for Four 14th-Level Characters

“The evil that men do lives after them.” That saying is often used to explain family curses and people’s enduring fascination with famous crimes. But some acts are so vile that they release evil as a palpable force—one that can infest the very land on which it arises. Even though the deeds that spawned it may be long forgotten, the evil remains, twisting and corrupting all who come into contact with it.

Such an ancient evil is at the heart of the events in *Anything Goes*. Centuries ago, vile acts of treachery combined with the necromantic arts to create an enduring evil force on the island called Remorte. Ever since, it has brought death and worse to those who dared to visit. Can the heroes cleanse the island of its malady before it claims even more lives?

LEVELS

Anything Goes is a site-based adventure for four 14th-level characters. Though not designed for any specific d20 MODERN campaign setting, *Anything Goes* features aliens, undead, psionics, magic, and high tech, so it isn’t appropriate for campaigns that exclude these elements. However, it’s a handy vehicle for introducing one of these elements to a game that previously excluded it. For example, a d20 MODERN game that previously included undead and magic, but not psionics or aliens, could put ghost-hunters face-to-face with creatures from another planet via this adventure.

You, the Game Master (GM), need a copy of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game* to run this adventure. A copy of the *d20 MODERN Menace Manual* would also be helpful, but it is not required, since full statistics for all the creatures taken from it are provided with the adventure. To get started, print out the adventure (including the map of Remorte Island) and read it through. Specific maps for the various locations on the island aren’t necessary, since each is a simple open area described in the text of the adventure. You can add as much or as little detail about each site as you wish.

Familiarize yourself with the general history of the situation, the layout of the island, its denizens and their plans, and the descriptions of *etoile*, *fraal*, *ghouls*, *sand slaves*, *bodaks*, and *revenants* from the *d20 MODERN Menace Manual*. Then make sure you are familiar with the rules for combat, movement, and cover from Chapter 5 of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game*.

The text that appears in shaded boxes should be read aloud or paraphrased for the players. Unshaded boxes contain important information for the GM, including special instructions. Opponents' statistics are provided in abbreviated form.

BACKGROUND

The island of Remorte is a small, isolated rock somewhere off the northeastern coast of the United States. The events currently taking place there stem from a centuries-old evil. Though it's not necessary for the heroes to understand every step leading from that ancient evil to the horrors the island currently contains, the entire history of the place is presented here so that you as GM can become familiar with it.

Remorte has no native inhabitants and precious little local fauna. It functioned as a pirate haven in the age of sail, and a horrendous massacre occurred here when the crews of two pirate ships fell to blows over the division of a cargo ship's spoils. One of the ships' captains knew a bit of voodoo necromancy, and he tried to raise his crew from the dead to continue fighting, but he made an error. The botched ritual turned all the dead pirates into zombies, which then slew all the remaining pirates and destroyed both ships. Local legend marked the island as accursed, and no one visited it for well over a century.

In the late 1950s, a developer decided that Remorte would be a fine site for a small resort. Construction began and went well at first, but the dead came back to life during a sudden storm, angry at the disturbance of their last resting place. A rescue ship eventually arrived to save the construction crew from the storm, but the rescue team could find no trace of the stranded workers. The resort plan was abandoned, and construction materials and machines were left to rust on the island beside the unfinished main building. The slain construction workers fell victim to the same black magic as the pirates had and eventually returned to unlife as *ghouls*. The locals once again decided that Remorte was cursed—or at least unlucky—and studiously avoided all contact with it.

During the 1980s and 1990s, many strange tales were told of Remorte, some of which were picked up by internet sites and small-press news agencies. Amateur hunters of the paranormal visited the island regularly, along with a few daring college students and young party-goers. Some disappeared, but others managed to get crude video of the undead on the island. While authorities and professionals dismissed the tapes as fakes, a few diehard believers pointed out that one of the ragged, dirty men caught on videotape by a 1999 expedition strongly resembled a picture of one of the lost workers from the resort construction crew. The man was unwashed but seemed spry, strong, and healthy—an impressive feat for a man who would be in his nineties.

Though Earth's scientific community ignored these reports, the alien *fraal* assigned to study our planet did not.

In conjunction with their ongoing efforts to understand humans, the *fraal* often captured specimens with unusual traits for study. A small group of *fraal* heard about the “long-lived” denizens of Remorte and assumed that they must be humans with unusual psionic powers. So the *fraal* came to Remorte, intending to capture and experiment on a few of these humans. They chose a stormy night to land their ship so as to minimize the chances of observation. But Remorte's undead are particularly active during storms, and the *fraal* were wholly unprepared for the vicious power of the *ghouls* that set upon them. Immune to the knockout gas the *fraal* used against them, the *ghouls* tore most of the alien landing party apart. None of the *fraal* survived, but four were so disturbed by their contact with true evil that they became undead known as *bodaks*. Unable to escape Remorte, the *bodaks* began capturing *ghouls* during the night and vivisectioning them in the basement of the incomplete resort manor.

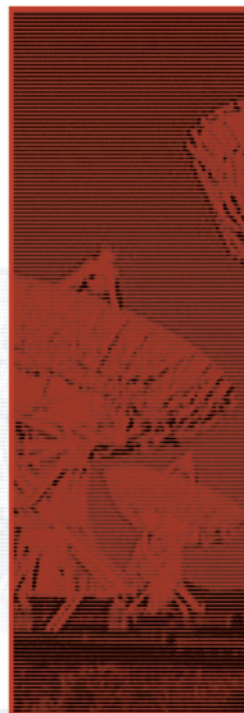
Another group of aliens, the *etoile*, are always watching the movements of other aliens on Earth—especially the *fraal*, who seem determined to help humanity resist the influence of aliens in general. Such interference angers the conquest-minded *etoile*, so whenever they detect a *fraal* operation, they send one or more of their own kind, usually with a complement of *sand slaves*, to put a stop to it. Thus, when word reached the *etoile* that a group of *fraal* were performing experiments on Remorte, an *etoile* agent went to investigate. But it was captured by the *bodaks* and tortured to death before it could make a report.

The evil energy that suffuses Remorte transformed the dead *etoile* into a *revenant*. The undead alien escaped the *bodak* and quickly re-established control over its *sand slaves*, which had been transformed into *ghouls* by the island's evil energy. Then, driven by hatred and a need to gain its revenge by destroying all *fraal* and all humanity, the undead *etoile* set about building an unholy army to serve its cause. It began by trying to buy the loyalty of the island's *ghouls*, but it quickly realized that such creatures could not effectively threaten two entire species.

Previously unaware of magic, the *etoile* *revenant* decided that its race had overlooked a vast source of power. So the creature sent its *sand slave* *ghouls* to locate and capture a worker of magic. The mage they found was soon subdued and turned into yet another *sand slave* *ghoul*. This *sand mage*, aided by the undead *etoile*, set about building a device powered by both technology and magic. This abyssal machine drew in the pure essence of evil from the island, congealing it into the sentient sludge of satanic ichor. Though it has taken the *etoile* *revenant* and its *sand mage* weeks to get the abyssal machine operational, they have at last succeeded. Unless it is stopped, the machine will turn out an army of satanic ichors and become a major threat to all living creatures.

SYNOPSIS

The heroes are called to investigate the rumors surrounding the island of Remorte. Upon arrival, they must defeat the demonic machines awaiting them at the island's sole docking point. After fighting their way past the pirate zombies, the *sand slave* *ghouls*, and the *bodaks*, they must face the *etoile*



revenant and its sand slave mage. (At that point, they're playing against a clock without knowing it. If they don't deal with both the sand mage and the etoile within a day or so, those two villains move their abyssal machine and set up shop somewhere else.) Finally, the heroes must slay the satanic ichor that the two undead have created and destroy the abyssal machine that manufactured it.

Character Hooks

As GM, you know best how to involve your players and their characters in an adventure. You can use the following adventure hooks to spur your imagination, modifying them as necessary to make them appropriate for the characters' interests.

- The company that owns Remorte is once again entertaining the idea of a resort on the island, but its executives fear another disaster. Mindful of the rumors that have always surrounded the place, they hire the heroes to investigate the location and ensure that no real threat exists.
- A retired ghost hunter or alien investigator has found excellent evidence that undead or aliens are present on the island, but he has been wrong so often that no serious authority believes him anymore. He's too old to try to capture a ghost or alien himself, but he is quite certain that an experienced team could make some real discoveries on Remorte. This person may be one of the heroes' old contacts, or he might simply have heard of their exploits. Either way, he contacts them and asks for their help.
- Heroes who are on friendly terms with the fraal (or any government agency that knows about them) are sent to investigate the disappearance of the fraal party from Remorte.
- The family of a reporter who disappeared while exploring Remorte contacts the heroes and asks for their help finding her.
- While exploring a different area of the Atlantic, the heroes' plane or boat suffers a system failure just as a storm moves in. The only possible refuge is Remorte.
- The etoile revenant lures the characters to Remorte because it needs one of them (probably either a psionic character or a spellcaster) to power the abyssal machine and generate more satanic ichor. Alternatively, it might need a mechanic to fix some purely technical problem that has arisen with the machine.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

Anything Goes is designed to be either a site-based adventure that the characters simply stumble into or the final, climactic confrontation with the etoile revenant if that creature has been a recurring villain in your campaign. Though it is set on a small Atlantic island, you can easily move it to any relatively isolated area that might have been visited by pirates. Isolation is the key factor because a group that can quickly and easily access a civilized area for support misses much of the feel of the adventure, and may miss its climax as well.

The adventure begins when the heroes decide to visit Remorte. If they wish to do some research on the place before departure, go to the Character Preparation section below. When they arrive on the island, go to Remorte.

Character Preparation

If the heroes have the time and inclination to research Remorte and the reports of strange goings-on there, they can dig up a fair amount of information. Unless you want to create a major GM character for this purpose, they won't be able to find an eyewitness who can swear to the presence of either aliens or undead on the island. But rumors and crackpot websites abound, and underground newspapers may also reveal important facts.

Anyone who asks the people living on the mainland about Remorte discovers that it's considered an unlucky island and that no one wants to talk about it (no check required). A Gather Information or Research check can unearth more specific information, as detailed on the tables below. The hero gains all the information for check results equal to or lower than his own.

GATHER INFORMATION DC	INFORMATION GAINED
10	The island of Remorte has been a place of rumor and legend for centuries, and not everyone who goes there returns.
15	The island was once a pirate haven, but a band of pirates led by a voodoo priest died there under mysterious circumstances centuries ago. No pirate ever visited the island after that.
20	A developer started building a resort on Remorte in the 1950s, but the plans were put on hold after a construction crew disappeared one stormy night. The crew of the rescue ship that went out to save the workers reported that "something felt terribly wrong." The owner of the construction company feared this assessment might mean that the construction materials were diseased somehow, so he abandoned the machines and materials there and simply wrote off the loss.
23	College students sometimes go to a spot just off the coast of Remorte to party, then dump their trash on the island in the morning. Even these young daredevils don't land on the island at night, though.
25	Strange lights were seen in the sky a few weeks ago during a particularly bad storm. The crew of a fishing boat that was blown near Remorte's shore claimed to have heard a plane landing there, followed by some odd, high-pitched screams, like those of a cat.

RESEARCH DC INFORMATION GAINED

10	Someone skilled with computer technology has recently begun systematically removing information about the island from internet sites. (In fact, both the fraal and etoile have been engaged in such efforts because they wish to hide their involvement with the events on the island.)
15	Most of the disappearances that have occurred on Remorte have happened on or just after stormy nights.
20	The company that tried to build a resort on Remorte consulted a psychic after its construction crew disappeared. The psychic warned that a great evil had been awakened there, and that the island should be abandoned.
23	Most of the investigators who returned safely to the mainland after spotting "something" on the island were carrying obvious holy symbols. Others who lacked these symbols generally disappeared.
25	On the night of the most recent storm, military radar installations detected a small vessel from outside the atmosphere. It landed on the island but did not leave it. The military is treating this report as a system glitch or a computer virus rather than an actual event.

Getting to the Island

Remorte is accessible by boat or plane. Hiring either is difficult but possible. No local commercial boater or seaplane operator wants to get near the island, and enough ships disappear nearby that anyone outside the immediate area is concerned about uncharted reefs or shallow rocks. A few college students think it's fun to make runs to the "forbidden" island, but they don't advertise. A professional can be convinced to go there only with a successful DC 18 Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check. In no case is anyone willing to sit and wait for the heroes on the island. Anyone who agrees to take the heroes to Remorte insists on dropping them off and picking them up a set number of hours or days later, but only in daylight.

REMORTE

The island measures 8 miles from north to south and 6-1/2 miles from east to west at its widest points. Its surface is completely covered in light woods and dominated by three large hills. High cliffs and dangerous reefs ring the island, making only one approach safe—the Junkyard (area 1). No native fauna larger than insects exist on the island, though birds sometimes roost here.

Random Encounters

Remorte is quiet during the day, but it can be quite dangerous at night and during storms. Roll 1d20 for each hour characters are on the island and consult the table below to see whether they have a random encounter. Add 10 to the die roll

during night hours and 10 if it's stormy (a 10% chance each 24-hour period). These adjustments are cumulative. Once a particular random encounter has occurred, ignore the same result for subsequent checks during the same 24 hour period.

D20 ROLL ENCOUNTER

1-15	No encounter.
16-19	Young Adult Partygoers: Four slightly drunk college students came over on a small speedboat that is currently anchored at area 1. Use the statistics for the low-level Fast/Dedicated Dilettante provided in the Supporting Characters section of the d20 Modern Roleplaying Game. If encountered at night, the students are running from something they saw an hour ago.
20-24	Independent Internet Reporter: Armed with a video camera, this eager young reporter plans to record some of the strange events rumored to happen here. He was dropped off by a boat that, unbeknownst to him, isn't coming back. So far, he hasn't seen anything worthwhile. Use statistics for the mid-level private eye provided in the Supporting Characters section of the d20 Modern Roleplaying Game for this character.
25-26	Pack of 20 Pirate Zombies: The pirate zombies wander the island aimlessly in search of prey (see area 2 for statistics).
27-28	Advanced Demonic Machine: A bulldozer with its lights on is roaming the island (see area 1 for statistics).
29+	Pack of eight ghouls: These undead were once construction workers (see area 3 for statistics).

1. The Junkyard

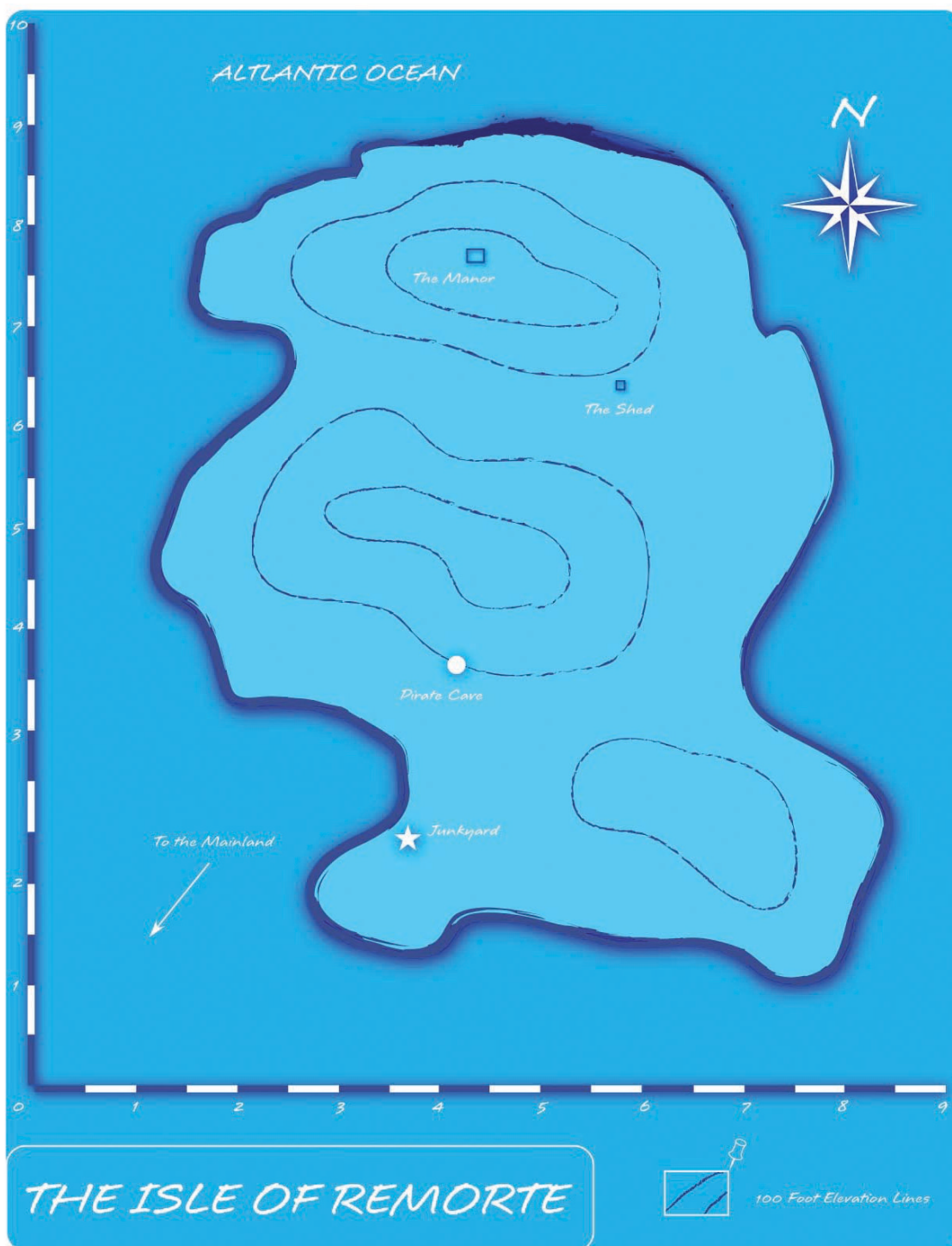
The junkyard is the only safe landing point on Remorte for either a boat or a plane. Everywhere else, the island drops into the ocean in a sheer cliff 20 to 40 feet high, topped by trees.

The natural harbor opens onto a beach covered with gray sand and brown, dead grass. Piles of trash and flotsam, including toasters, beer cans, and junk food wrappers, stretch out a hundred feet in all directions. Broken tools and rusting tractors and forklifts give mute evidence of a long-abandoned construction site. Pools of stagnant water or oil occupy every nook and crevice, giving the beach an unwholesome smell. A small, dead fish floats at the edge of the water.

This area is the best harbor on Remorte and the only spot where a boat can safely put in to shore. Largely for that reason, it has been used as a dumping ground by those brave enough to approach the island. While the resort was under construction, the workers piled broken equipment here for pickup. The fish died from the pollution in the water nearby.

Creatures: Several of the demonic machines created by the etoile revenant out of abandoned construction





equipment lair here. Others have wandered off to seek other lairs on the island.

Demonic Machines (4; forklift, piledriver, riding mower, wood chipper): CR 5; Large construct; HD 5d10+15; hp 42; Mas —; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 13, touch 8, flat-footed 13 (–1 size, –1 Dex, +5 natural); BAB +3; Grap +12; Atk +7 melee (1d6+5, claw); Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+5, 2 claws); FS 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ construct, damage reduction 10/+1, grind 2d6+5, improved grab; AL evil; SV Fort +1, Ref +0, Will +1, AP 0; Rep +0; Str 20, Dex 8, Con —, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 5.

Skills: Bluff +5, Listen +10, Sense Motive +8, Spot +10.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative.

Grind (Ex): A demonic machine may make a grind attack at its normal attack bonus against a grappled creature, dealing 2d6+5 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the demonic machine must hit an opponent at least one size category smaller than itself with its claw attack. If it gets a hold, it automatically deals claw damage each round that the hold is maintained, and it can grind in the next round.

Advanced Demonic Machines (4; CAT, crane, pickup truck, tractor): CR 8; Huge construct; HD 8d10+20; hp 64; Mas —; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 14, touch 6, flat-footed 14 (–2 size, –2 Dex, +8 natural); BAB +6; Grap +23; Atk +13 melee

(2d4+9, claw); Full Atk +13 melee (2d4+9, 2 claws); FS 15 ft. by 15 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SQ construct, damage reduction 10/+1, grind 4d4+9, improved grab; AL evil; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +2, AP 0; Rep +0; Str 28, Dex 6, Con —, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 5.

Skills: Bluff +8, Intimidate +2, Listen +13, Search +1, Sense Motive +11, Spot +13.

Feats: Alertness, Improved Initiative.

Grind (Ex): An advanced demonic machine may make a grind attack at its normal attack bonus against a grappled creature, dealing 4d4+9 points of damage.

Improved Grab (Ex): To use this ability, the advanced demonic machine must hit an opponent at least one size category smaller than itself with its claw attack. If it gets a hold, it automatically deals claw damage each round that the hold is maintained, and it can grind in the next round.

Tactics: These machines attack in large numbers only to defend one of their number or if the opponents have no visible means of escape (such as a waiting boat). Because they were created by the etoile revenant, these demonic machines cannot use the machine possession ability that most such creatures have (see Demonic Machine in the *d20 MODERN Menace Manual*). Once their host bodies are wrecked, the animating forces are destroyed forever.

If the heroes arrive in their own boat or plane, only the tractor attacks. It waits for a target to come within 30 feet, then pops into gear and charges with its shovel. If it hits, it uses its improved grab ability to pin its target and deal damage each round until its hold is broken. If reduced to less than half its original hit points, the tractor flees. Otherwise, it does not pursue anyone or attack any other target at this point, preferring to let its initial attack be brushed off as a freak accident.

Heroes who are dropped off on the island or who clearly see the demonic machines for what they are rouse the full fury of the junkyard. All the demonic machines attack and keep fighting until dead. They use the same basic tactics as the tractor, pinning foes whenever possible. They also charge or use flanking when appropriate to increase their attack bonuses against hard-to-hit foes.

Development: Buried under the other junk and machinery in the junkyard is the shuttle (Large vehicle) in which the fraal arrived. The etoile revenant ordered its sand slave ghouls to smash the craft and conceal its remains. Not enough of it is left to make any technological discoveries, since the few bits of non-Earth technology self-destructed when it was disabled. However, a few scattered bits of the control panels and door hatches (Search DC 35) are adorned with fraal writing. These pieces may prove useful against the bodaks lurking in the manor basement (area 5), since they fear fraal writing. A successful DC 25 Investigate check reveals that the pieces of the fraal ship were buried to conceal them, and they were added to the pile far more recently than the junk piled atop them.

2. The Pirate Caves

The cave system that houses the pirate zombies is long but not complex. A single, 30-foot-wide cavern opens on the side of a hill and extends 200 feet into the island's interior.

This damp cavern stretches far into the darkness. The dank smell of stale water and rotting fish fills the air, but another foul odor underlies that. The slightest sound seems magnified by the acoustics of the cave, including something that sounds like . . . footsteps. Up ahead, something seems to be moving in the darkness.

This cavern fills with water to a depth of 4 feet at high tide, but it never completely floods. Fish occasionally get caught in tide pools here, and their rotting corpses add to the scent of decay. Land animals and birds avoid this place because of its lingering aura of necromancy.

Creatures: The pirate captain performed his voodoo in this very cave, and the pirate zombies he inadvertently created still use it as their lair. They look like skeletons tied together with leathery cords of skin, wearing a few rags. They don't venture out of the caves except in storms, but intruders anger them.

Pirate Zombies (40): CR 1/2; Medium-size undead; HD 2d12+3; hp 16; Mas —; Init -1; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural); BAB +1; Grap +2; Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, slam); Full Atk +2 melee (1d6+1, slam); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ move or attack action only, undead; AL evil; SV Fort +0, Ref -1, Will +3, AP 0; Rep +0; Str 13, Dex 8, Con —, Int —, Wis 10, Cha 1.

Skills: None.

Feats: Toughness.

Move or Attack Action Only (Ex): A pirate zombie has poor reflexes and can perform only a single move action or attack action on its turn. It can move and attack only if it charges.

Tactics: The zombies gather just outside the range of any light source (and just out of darkvision range) until a target moves at least 120 feet into the cave. They then attack in a mob, pummeling anything alive.

The pirate zombies are old-fashioned undead with an old-fashioned weakness—an aversion to holy symbols. A zombie must make a DC 15 Will save to come within 1d4[TS]10 feet of a visible symbol. If within that range and unable to flee, it takes a -2 morale penalty on attack rolls, damage rolls, and skill checks.

Development: The remains of a pirate zombie offer few clues to its origins, but a successful DC 30 Investigate check reveals enough clues to suggest a pirate from the age of sail. A few also wear hard hats or carry rusted wrenches—spoils from the battle in which they set upon and killed the construction workers.

Treasure: At the very back of the cavern lies the treasure that the zombies killed each other over. Most of the goods have long since rotted away, so the pile at first appears to be nothing more than a collection of spoiled wine, broken casks, moldering silks, and ruined, waterlogged art and wood. But a careful inspection (Search DC 20) reveals a few metal treasures that time has not ruined, including a pair of silver candlesticks, numerous gold coins, and some jewelry. These items represent a wealth award of +12.



3. The Shed

This building was the vehicle shed and storage area for the construction crew. It was set up far from the manor so that the heavy traffic to and from it would not tear up the garden area.

A lonely, prefabricated building made of rusted, corrugated metal sits on a cleared patch of dull earth surrounded by dead grasses and scraggly bushes. Built like an oversized shed, it measures about 30 feet to a side and has a flat roof. A few scraps of junk—including a broken hammer and a half-buried hard hat—litter the earthen clearing. A single light once illuminated the sliding double doors, but the bulb has long since burned out. A faint wisp of a sickly odor lingers on the air, like the smell of an infected wound.

The shed is completely unlit, and the inside is pitch black even in noontime light. The metal walls and roof are rusted and thin (hardness 5, 10 hit points). The roof is too weak to support more than about 100 pounds, and anyone weighing more than that who climbs atop it falls through after 2 rounds, smack into the pack of ghouls waiting inside. The constant presence of the ghouls has infected the whole shed with disease, so anyone who touches the structure (even just by listening closely at the door or a wall) is infected with disease as if bitten by a ghoul.

Creatures: The construction worker ghouls make their home here. Because the bodaks occasionally capture and torture some of them, they have learned to stay indoors most of the time. They make no effort to venture out unless disturbed or riled by bad weather, which reminds them of the night they died.

Construction Worker Ghouls (20, Human Strong Ordinary 1/Tough Ordinary 1): CR 3; Medium-size undead; HD 2d12; hp 13; Mas —; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; Defense 16, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+2 Dex, +2 class, +2 natural); BAB +1; Grap +4; Atk +3 ranged (2d8, revolver) or +4 melee (1d3+3, claw); Full Atk +3 ranged (2d8, revolver) or +4 melee (1d3+3, 2 claws) and +2 melee (1d6+1 plus disease, bite); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ create spawn, darkvision 60 ft., disease, scent, undead; AL chaos, evil; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +0, AP 0; Rep +0; Str 16, Dex 14, Con —, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Occupation: Blue collar (class skills: Craft [mechanical], Drive, Intimidate).

Skills: Craft (mechanical) +5, Drive +6, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (popular culture) +2, Knowledge (streetwise) +2, Profession +4, Read/Write English, Repair +2, Speak English, Swim +4.

Feats: Brawl, Multiattack, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Simple Weapon Proficiency.

Create Spawn (Su): If a ghoul's prey contracts advanced necrotizing faciitis from the wounds it has sustained and dies from the disease, it rises 1d3 days later as a ghoul. A *remove disease* spell cast on the corpse can prevent it from rising.

Disease (Su): A ghoul's bite infects the victim with a supernatural version of streptococcal gangrene (injury, Fort DC 14, incubation period 1d3 days, initial damage 1d3 Con, secondary damage 1d3 Con). If Con damage is sustained, a second saving throw at the same DC is required; failure

indicates that 1 point of the Con damage becomes Con drain instead. This disease, known as advanced necrotizing faciitis, first manifests as an area of redness on the skin near the wound. Over the course of a few days, the redness becomes severe inflammation. The skin gradually turns dark purple and forms bloody blisters as the disease devours more and more of the victim's flesh. The disease can be arrested completely through amputation of the affected limb, but most doctors prefer to combat it by surgical removal of all the affected tissue as well as some nearby healthy tissue. A *remove disease* spell or a successful Treat Injury check (surgery, DC 25) halts the disease. The GM should roll the check secretly; if it fails, the disease returns again in 1d3 days.

Possessions: S&W M29 revolver, 6 rounds ammunition, rags, hard hat.

Tactics: Each ghoul is armed with a .44 magnum revolver. They have yet to use the weapons, but they are happy to use intruders as target practice. When the heroes come within melee range, they switch to claws and teeth.

Development: The ghouls are savage, brutal killers interested only in causing pain, but they also have a sense of self-preservation. If they are clearly overmatched, they scatter, running to the sea and swimming underwater to escape.

If promised its freedom, a captured ghoul can describe the events on Remorte since its arrival, as it understands them. Such a history includes the arrival and death of the fraal and the creation of the bodaks. If possible, the ghoul avoids mentioning the etoile, but if asked about the guns, it simply admits that the ghouls received them from a "flying can of rust."

The etoile revenant doesn't think of the ghouls as human, and it knows they fear the bodaks, so it has begun trying to bring them under its control. So far it hasn't tried making them sand slaves, but it did instruct its agents to offer them the one thing they seem to crave—weapons.

4. The Grounds

The manor and grounds can be seen from atop any of the three hills.

A large building stands in the center of the island, framed by the three hills. The structure has the outline of an attractive manor, but it looks as though it was never completed and has suffered years of neglect. Doorways and window frames sit empty, tattered tarps flutter from multiple openings in the walls and roof, and a few exposed beams are visible—most of them cracked. A few lights gleam from the manor's roof, but since they face outward, they actually make it more difficult to see what lies within. A maze of dead bushes surrounds the building, its pattern obscured by years of overgrowth and the remains of construction materials.

The bushes are all that remains of a sculptured hedge maze planted by the landscapers. Anyone can navigate the simple maze with a successful DC 10 Intelligence check. Pushing through the maze is more difficult. A character must push through twelve bushes to reach the manor, and each takes 1 round and a DC 15 Strength check to get past. Furthermore,

each bush makes an attack (+7 melee, 1d4, thorns) on anyone attempting to push through it. Regardless of the method used to reach the manor, the attempt draws the notice of the guardians surrounding the building.

Creatures: Four sand slave ghoule Telepaths patrol the grounds day and night. These creatures were the agents that the etoile revenant selected to capture its occultist. They make excellent guards, since as undead creatures they have darkvision and require no sleep. Since these creatures have no Constitution scores, they cannot use the fugue, hot running, and stasis powers that sand slaves normally have.

Sand Slave Ghoul Charismatic Hero 3/Telepath 5 (4): CR 12; Medium undead (human); HD 8d12; hp 52; Mas —; Init +3; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 18, touch 16, flat-footed 15 (+3 Dex, +3 class, +2 natural); BAB +3; Grap +4; Atk +4 melee (1d3+1, claw); Full Atk +4 melee (1d3+1, 2 claws) and +2 melee (1d6 plus disease, bite); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ create spawn, darkvision 60 ft., disease, electricity resistance 10, fast ability healing 1, fast healing 3, fortification, immunities (disease, poison), network mind, power crystal, psionic powers, psionic skills, scent, self-destruct, telepathy 200 ft., trigger power (*charm person, levitate*), undead; AL chaos, etoile, evil; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will +7; AP 4; Rep +4; Str 12, Dex 17, Con —, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 17.

Occupation: Academic (class skills: Gather Information, Read/Write Latin, Speak Latin).

Skills: Autohypnosis +6, Bluff +16, Concentration +12, Diplomacy +15, Disguise +11, Gather Information +16, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (current events) +7, Knowledge (popular culture) +7, Listen +2, Profession +6, Psicraft +7, Read/Write English, Read/Write Latin, Speak English, Speak Latin, Spot +2.

Feats: Alertness, Deceptive, Iron Will, Multiattack, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Trustworthy, Wild Talent (far hand).

Talents: Coordinate, inspiration.

Power Points per Day: 15.

Create Spawn (Su): If a sand slave ghoule's prey contracts advanced necrotizing faciitis from the wounds it has sustained and dies from the disease, it rises 1d3 days later as a ghoule. A *remove disease* spell cast on the corpse can prevent it from rising.

Disease (Su): A sand slave ghoule's bite infects the victim with a supernatural version of streptococcal gangrene (injury, Fort DC 14, incubation period 1d3 days, initial damage 1d3 Con, secondary damage 1d3 Con). If Con damage is sustained, a second saving throw at the same DC is required; failure indicates that 1 point of the Con damage becomes Con drain instead. This disease, known as advanced necrotizing faciitis, first manifests as an area of redness on the skin near the wound. Over the course of a few days, the redness becomes severe inflammation. The skin gradually turns dark purple and forms bloody blisters as the disease devours more and more of the victim's flesh. Advanced necrotizing faciitis can be arrested completely through amputation of the affected limb, but most doctors prefer to combat it by surgical removal of all the affected tissue as well as some nearby healthy tissue. A *remove disease* spell or a successful Treat Injury check (surgery, DC 25) halts the disease. The GM should roll the check secretly; if it fails, the disease returns in 1d3 days.

Fast Ability Healing 1 (Ex): A sand slave ghoule heals ability damage at the rate of 1 ability score point per damaged ability per round.

Fast Healing 3 (Ex): A sand slave ghoule heals 3 points of damage per round unless it is reduced to –10 or fewer hit points. This ability does not enable the sand slave ghoule to regrow or reattach severed body parts.

Fortification (Ex): A sand slave ghoule has a 50% chance to ignore the extra damage from a critical hit.

Network Mind (Ex): A sand slave ghoule is automatically aware of the position and general emotional status of any other sand slaves within 200 feet. All sand slaves within that range that can see one another are in constant telepathic communication. If one is aware of a particular threat, they all are. If one sand slave ghoule in a particular group is not flat-footed, none of them are. No sand slave ghoule in such a group is considered flanked unless they all are.

Self-Destruct (Ex): When reduced to –10 hit points or below, a sand slave ghoule's body immediately turns into a pile of dust.

Telepathy (Ex): A sand slave ghoule can communicate its thoughts and desires to any etoile or sand slave within 200 feet that it can see, regardless of intervening matter such as glass. The target creature "hears" the sand slave ghoule's thoughts in whatever language it can most easily understand. However, it cannot communicate thoughts back to the sand slave ghoule unless it also has telepathy.

Telepath Powers Known (4/3/2): 0—*daze* (DC 13), *detect psionics*, *lesser natural armor*, *telepathic projection* (DC 13); 1st—*charm person* (DC 14), *lesser metaphysical weapon*, *object reading*; 2nd—*inflict pain* (DC 15), *levitate*.

Tactics: The sand slave ghoules approach any heroes they spot and attempt to *charm* them. Using the Bluff skill, they then try to convince the intruders that the manor is private property and no one is allowed within. Meanwhile, since the guards are all in telepathic contact with each other, they all move toward the party in case combat should ensue. If peaceful tactics fail to turn aside the intruders, the guards resort to psionic attacks, then to claws and teeth if pressed. The sand slave ghoules can attack even a flying target by levitating to engage it in melee or using psionic ranged attacks.

Development: Unless the sand slave ghoules are somehow lured away from the manor before they encounter the heroes, their telepathy reveals the nature and abilities of their attackers to the sand mage and etoile revenant watching from the windows of the manor. The two don't flee because they cannot take the abyssal machine with them unless they have a few days to move it. They do, however, lay ambushes, move to positions of tactical advantage, and get ready to attack the intruders when they arrive.

5. The Basement

On the west side of the manor is a set of double doors that leads down into the basement. The doors were once locked, but the island's various inhabitants long ago prevailed over it, as evidenced by the broken chain dangling from one door and the deep scratches that cover the surfaces of both. The doors open to reveal cracked wooden stairs leading down into the darkness. Read or paraphrase the following when the heroes reach the foot of the stairs.



The stale air is thick with the smells of dust and rotting timber. A severed human hand, long dead and gray, lies at the foot of the stairs. Ahead lies what seems to be a single, huge room buttressed with support braces but lacking interior walls. The inside of the cement outer wall is covered with crude images that have been scratched into the surface with something sharp and hard. Scraping noises come from the deep darkness ahead, slowly moving closer.

This area is 50 feet wide and 80 feet long.

Creatures: The bodaks lair in the back of this room, hiding from the light of day and dissecting any captured ghouls they have available. (The hand at the bottom of the stairs once belonged to a ghoul.)

Advanced Bodaks (4): CR 11; Medium-size undead; HD 12d12; hp 78; Mas —; Init +5; Spd 20 ft.; Defense 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+1 Dex, +3 natural); BAB +6; Grap +9; Atk +9 melee (1d6+4, slam); Full Atk +9 melee (1d6+4, slam); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ damage reduction 15/+1, death gaze (DC 17), electricity immunity, flashbacks (fraal writing weakness), resistances (acid 20, fire 20), sunlight vulnerability, undead; AL evil; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +9; AP 0; Rep +0; Str 17, Dex 13, Con —, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 12.

Skills: Hide +11, Listen +11, Move Silently +11, Spot +11.

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility.

Death Gaze (Su): Any creature within 30 feet of a bodak that meets its gaze must succeed on a DC 17 Fortitude save or die instantly. This ability is usable at will.

Flashbacks (Ex): These bodaks have a weakness for fraal writing. If shown any fraal script (such as that on the pieces of the fraal ship in the junkyard), they take no actions for 1 round, though they can defend themselves normally. Thereafter, each advanced bodak takes a -2 morale penalty on all attack rolls directed at that opponent for the remainder of the combat.

Sunlight Vulnerability (Ex): The merest touch of sunlight sears an advanced bodak's tainted alien flesh. Each round of exposure to the direct rays of the sun deals 1 point of damage to the creature.

Tactics: Unless attacked, the bodaks don't move near the door in the daytime, or if the heroes have a bright light. The size of the basement allows the bodaks to initially stay out of any illumination the heroes have. When the intruders move deeper into the room, the bodaks attack regardless of light conditions and follow any fleeing opponents into daylight if necessary, even though doing so may destroy them.

Development: Using random bits of metal, the bodaks have scrawled pictograms on all the walls of the basement, from just inside the only door all the way back to their lair. These crude carvings depict big-headed stick figures (the fraal), short, wide stick figures (the ghouls), and a great deal of violence and blood, as well as a small flying saucer. A successful DC 20 Decipher Script check translates the images, revealing that aliens landed here and were killed by creatures immune to their weapons. The story also reveals that four of these aliens survived but discovered that both the sun and their own saucer hurt them, so they fled into the

darkness. A DC 35 Decipher Script check reveals that the four fraal didn't survive, but they continued to move and function even after death.

This room contains no fraal writing. Any character who has translated the pictograms may attempt a DC 30 Investigate check to realize that the bodaks tried to write words but kept scratching them out and eventually resorted to pictograms. A DC 25 Research check made while investigating alien lore on the internet also reveals this weakness.

6. The Main Floor

The 80-foot-wide main floor of the manor is a sorry shell of what might have become a grand hotel lobby.

The unfinished manor has fallen into ruin. Tarps hang from empty window frames, and no doors fill the doorways. Piles of decaying drywall sit in damp heaps just outside the door, and mud and refuse litter the floor inside. No interior walls are finished, and the only architectural feature gracing the first floor is a single stairway in the center of the room, supported by numerous posts. A greenish glow illuminates the stairs from above and leaks through cracks in the ceiling. Behind the stairs sits a barely visible figure, apparently lost in thought. Hovering next to it is a floating object that looks for all the world like a broken, rusty Christmas tree ornament with wiggling wires hanging from it.

The etoile revenant and its sand mage servant spend most of their time here, waiting for the abyssal machine to produce more of the ooze known as satanic ichor. They dare not sit too near the ichor, for fear that it may use them to get out of its container. Though the ichor is a means to their end, they are well aware that it hates them as much as it hates everything and everyone else.

The revenant is a hateful creature that wishes to destroy humans and fraal alike, but it's also an intelligent schemer. If it hears a commotion outside the manor, it sends a robot to investigate and keeps track of any fight its sand slave ghouls have through telepathy. Thus, it probably has advance warning of the heroes' approach and their abilities. Unless the etoile revenant has a use in mind for the intruders (such as sacrifices or repair personnel for the abyssal machine), the two monsters attack them as soon as soon as they reach this area.

Tactics: You as GM must decide what tactics make the most sense for these villains, based on what they know of the heroes' abilities. Their base tactics are as follows, though you can make any changes that seem appropriate based on the action thus far.

The sand mage begins by turning invisible, then casting *mage armor*, *displacement*, and *shield* as quickly as possible using his Heroic Surge feat. He then attacks, targeting the toughest-looking character with *bestow curse* and hitting as many targets as possible with *lightning bolt* (again, using Heroic Surge to cast these spells quickly). Thereafter, he ties up targets with a *web* and picks off individuals with *magic missiles*. If an opponent is clearly enhanced with spells, the sand mage uses *dispel magic* before casting offensive spells

against that target. If he runs out of offensive spells, he resorts to fragmentation grenades. Since he has evasion, he doesn't worry about catching himself in the grenade's blast, trusting his reflexes to save him from damage. If the sand mage is clearly going to lose the fight, he throws a grenade onto the second floor to free the satanic ichor from its holding cell. Since the sand mage has no Constitution score, he cannot use the fugue, hot running, and stasis powers that sand slaves normally have.

After 3 rounds of combat, the satanic ichor (see area 7) becomes aware of the heroes and attempts to lure one upstairs telepathically, claiming to be a bound Telepath who is about to be turned into an undead. If a hero approaches the ichor, it attacks with its corrupt the mind attack, hoping to free itself.

The etoile revenant stays near the sand mage and helps in a fight as long as some hope of victory remains, but it flees if the battle turns against it. If defeated but not destroyed, the revenant flees at the earliest opportunity and begins building another abyssal machine elsewhere.

If the heroes break off combat and move to rest somewhere, the sand mage and etoile revenant press the attack rather than allow their foes to recover.

Sand Slave Ghoul Fast Hero 4/Smart Hero 1/Mage 7: CR 16; Medium undead (human); HD 12d12; hp 78; Mas —; Init +8; Spd 40 ft.; Defense 25, touch 23, flat-footed 25 (+4 Dex, +9 class, +2 natural); BAB +6; Grap +10; Atk +10 melee (1d3+4, claw) or +10 ranged (4d6, fragmentation grenade); Full Atk +10 melee (1d3+4, 2 claws) and +8 melee (1d6+2 plus disease, bite) or +10 ranged (4d6, fragmentation grenade); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ arcane skills, arcane spells, brew potions, combat casting, create spawn, darkvision 60 ft., disease (DC 14), electricity resistance 10, familiar (none), fast ability healing 1, fast healing 3, fortification, immunities (disease, poison), network mind, scent, scribe scrolls, scribe tattoo, self-destruct, spell mastery (*dispel magic*, *invisibility*, *magic missile*), telepathy 200 ft., undead; AL chaos, etoile, evil; SV Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +8; AP 5; Rep +4; Str 18, Dex 18, Con —, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Occupation: Academic (class skills: Decipher Script, Knowledge [arcane lore], Research).

Skills: Bluff +4, Computer Use +10, Concentration +15, Craft (chemical) +10, Craft (mechanical) +7, Decipher Script +13, Drive +8, Knowledge (arcane lore) +10, Knowledge (technology) +10, Listen +10, Read/Write English, Read/Write Japanese, Read/Write Latin, Research +21, Sense Motive +3, Speak Language English, Speak Language Japanese, Speak Language Latin, Spellcraft +17, Spot +10, Tumble +12.

Feats: Alertness, Combat Expertise, Defensive Martial Arts, Dodge, Elusive Target, Heroic Surge, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Simple Weapon Proficiency, Studious.

Talents (Fast Hero): Evasion, uncanny dodge I.

Talents (Smart Hero): Savant (Research).

Create Spawn (Su): If the sand mage's prey contracts advanced necrotizing faciitis from the wounds it has sustained and dies from the disease, it rises 1d3 days later as a ghoul. A *remove disease* spell cast on the corpse can prevent it from rising.

Disease (Su): The sand mage's bite infects the victim with a supernatural version of streptococcal gangrene (injury, Fort

DC 14, incubation period 1d3 days, initial damage 1d3 Con, secondary damage 1d3 Con). If Con damage is sustained, a second saving throw at the same DC is required; failure indicates that 1 point of the Con damage becomes Con drain instead. This disease, known as advanced necrotizing faciitis, first manifests as an area of redness on the skin near the wound. Over the course of a few days, the redness becomes severe inflammation. The skin gradually turns dark purple and forms bloody blisters as the disease devours more and more of the victim's flesh. Advanced necrotizing faciitis can be arrested completely through amputation of the affected limb, but most doctors prefer to combat it by surgical removal of all the affected tissue as well as some nearby healthy tissue. A *remove disease* spell or a successful Treat Injury check (surgery, DC 25) halts the disease. The GM should roll the check secretly; if it fails, the disease returns in 1d3 days.

Fast Ability Healing 1 (Ex): The sand mage heals ability damage at the rate of 1 ability score point per damaged ability per round.

Fast Healing 3 (Ex): The sand mage heals 3 points of damage per round unless it is reduced to -10 or fewer hit points. This ability does not enable the sand mage to regrow or reattach severed body parts.

Fortification (Ex): A sand mage has a 50% chance to ignore the extra damage from a critical hit.

Network Mind (Ex): The sand mage is automatically aware of the position and general emotional status of any other sand slaves within 200 feet. All sand slaves within that range that can see one another are in constant telepathic communication. If one is aware of a particular threat, they all are. If one sand slave in a particular group is not flat-footed, none of them are. No sand slave in such a group is considered flanked unless they all are.

Self-Destruct (Ex): When reduced to -10 hit points or below, the sand mage's body immediately turns into a pile of dust.

Telepathy (Ex): A sand mage can communicate its thoughts and desires to any etoile or sand slave within 200 feet that it can see, regardless of intervening matter such as glass. The target creature "hears" the sand mage's thoughts in whatever language it can most easily understand. However, it cannot communicate thoughts back to the sand mage unless it also has telepathy.

Mage Spells Prepared (4/5/4/3/1; save DC 13 + spell level) 0—*detect magic*, *light*, *mage hand*, *read magic*; 1st—*mage armor*, *magic missile* (3), *shield*; 2nd—*invisibility*, *resist energy*, *spider climb*, *web*; 3rd—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *lightning bolt*; 4th—*bestow curse*.

Possessions: Notebook computer (contains electronic spellbook*), casual outfit, overcoat, electrical tool kit, 6 fragmentation grenades.

*The spellbook contains all of the spells the sand mage has prepared, plus *arcane lock*, *burning hands*, *change self*, *detect magical aura*, *dimension door*, *light*, *power device*, *prestidigitation*, *protection from arrows/bullets*, and *tongues*. The spellbook files are protected by an exceptional security system requiring a successful DC 35 Computer Use check to defeat.

Etoile Revenant Techie 5: CR 9; Tiny undead (air, earth); HD 8d12; hp 52; Mas —; Init +10; Spd fly 50 ft. (perfect);



Defense 33, touch 21, flat-footed 27 (+2 size, +6 Dex, +3 class, +12 natural); BAB +4; Grap -3; Atk +12 melee (1d3+1 plus 1d6 electricity, pincer); Full Atk +12 melee (1d3+1 plus 1d6 electricity, pincer); FS 2-1/2 ft. by 2-1/2 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ build robot, create demonic machine, darkvision 60 ft., device operation, electric shock, extreme machine, immunity to electricity, jury-rig +2, mastercraft, mechanical healing, nannite infection (DC 19), revenant regeneration, special vulnerability (bludgeoning), telepathy, turn resistance, undead, vulnerability fear (bodak hand); AL etoile, evil; SV Fort +4, Ref +12, Will +6; AP 2; Rep +2; Str 13, Dex 22, Con —, Int 20, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills: Balance +14, Climb +9, Computer Use +18, Craft (electronic) +18, Craft (mechanical) +18, Demolitions +14, Disable Device +18, Escape Artist +12, Hide +22, Intimidate +10, Jump +9, Knowledge (earth and life sciences) +10, Knowledge (physical sciences) +11, Knowledge (technology) +17, Listen +9, Move Silently +14, Read/Write English, Read/Write Japanese, Research +16, Repair +18, Sense Motive +9, Spot +9, Treat Injury +7, Tumble +14.

Feats: Builder, Cautious, Combat Reflexes, Defensive Martial Arts, Educated (Knowledge [physical sciences], Knowledge [technology]), Gearhead, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Quick Draw, Quick Reload, Run, Surgery, Weapon Finesse (pincer).

Device Operation (Ex): At will as an attack action, the etoile revenant can turn on any machine powered by electricity with a touch, even if the device usually requires a key, a passcode, or other security bypass to activate. If the object lacks a power source, it operates for only 1 round after activation. If desired, the etoile revenant can supply continuous power to operate an unpowered device. To do so, it must keep all three pincers in contact with the device, and it can do nothing else except move (assuming it can lift the device). It generates enough power to continuously operate a desk-top computer.

Create Demonic Machine (Su): Unlike other etoiles and revenants, this creature can summon demonic spirits to animate long-abandoned machines once per week. The resulting demonic machines may have up to 8 HD and be Huge or smaller. The demonic machines are in no way loyal to the etoile revenant; they simply wander off on their own to cause as much pain and havoc as possible. The etoile creates them only to obtain guards for a particular area and to draw attention away from its other machinations.

Electric Shock (Ex): When an etoile revenant hits with a melee or melee touch attack, it can choose to shock its foe for an additional 1d6 points of electricity damage as a free action.

Mechanical Healing (Ex): The etoile revenant cannot heal normally. To regain hit points lost to damage, it must either be repaired like a mechanical device or devour the corpse of another etoile.

All the normal rules for healing via the Treat Injury skill can be applied to an etoile revenant, but a Repair check rather than a Treat Injury check is required. Any creature (including an etoile) without a mechanical repair kit takes a penalty on Repair checks, just as a character lacking a first aid kit would when making treat Injury checks.

Alternatively, the etoile revenant can consume the body of a dead etoile to heal itself. This process requires an

available etoile corpse and three full-round actions. As soon as consumption is complete, the etoile revenant regains all lost hit points and heals all ability damage.

Nannite Infection (Ex): Through a process as yet unknown, an etoile revenant naturally produces microscopic machines known as nannites within its body. Once per day as a free action, it can inject these nannites into a foe it has damaged with a pincer. The nannites function as a disease, attacking the host creature's DNA and transforming its structure and psychology over time.

A creature injected with nannites must immediately make a DC 16 Fortitude save. On a successful save, the creature's body fights off the infection, destroying the nannites in the process. On a failed save, the creature immediately takes 1 point of Dexterity damage and 1 point of Wisdom damage. Each day thereafter, the creature must succeed on a new Fortitude save at the same DC or take 1d3 points of Dexterity damage and 1d3 points of Wisdom damage. Two successful saving throws in a row indicate that the creature has fought off the nannite infection, but any damage already taken must heal normally. If an infected creature has an Intelligence score of at least 6 and either its Dexterity or its Wisdom score is reduced to 0 by the disease, it is transformed into a sand slave. Such a creature immediately gains the sand slave template (see page 79 in the *d20 MODERN Menace Manual*), and all ability damage previously dealt by the disease is healed. Thereafter, the new sand slave is a servant of all etoile and can no longer be cured of the nannite infection.

Nannite infection has no visible symptoms, and many confuse its debilitating effects with drunkenness or drug use. However, microscopic study of an infected creature's blood or high-resolution x-rays can reveal the nannites and the alterations they have created in its body structure.

A creature other than an etoile using the Treat Injury skill to treat the disease takes a -10 penalty on Treat Injury checks unless it also has at least 5 ranks in both Knowledge (technology) and Knowledge (physical sciences), or 5 ranks in Disable Device.

Telepathy (Ex): Though it cannot produce sounds, the etoile revenant can communicate its thoughts and desires to any creature within 200 feet that it can see, regardless of intervening matter such as glass. The target creature "hears" the etoile revenant's thoughts in whatever language it can most easily understand. However, it cannot communicate thoughts back to the etoile revenant unless it also has telepathy.

Revenant Regeneration (Ex): Only bludgeoning damage actually reduces the etoile revenant's hit points. However, damage of other sorts does have an effect. Track the revenant's nonvulnerability damage separate from its hit points. When that damage equals or exceeds its current hit point total, it falls prone and is immobile and helpless for 2d6 rounds. During this time, any further damage dealt to it heals instantly. When this time elapses, the etoile revenant arises to fight again, and its nonvulnerability damage tally is wiped clean. Bludgeoning damage reduces the creature's revenant regeneration damage threshold by reducing its actual hit points.

Special Vulnerability (Ex): Since the etoile died from bludgeoning damage, only bludgeoning attacks deal damage

to the revenant normally. Should it reach 0 hit points from such damage, it is destroyed.

Turn Resistance (Ex): The etoile revenant is treated as an 11-HD undead for the purpose of turn or rebuke attempts. This turn resistance increases by an additional +2 when it sees a creature upon whom it wishes to take revenge and decreases by -2 while it is within sight of a bodak's hand. These modifiers stack.

Possessions: Tiny robot (wheeled, 10 ranks in Disable Device), Diminutive robot (wheeled, 10 ranks in Demolitions).

7. The Second Floor

The sand mage and etoile revenant have been using the second floor to house the abyssal machine and the single satanic ichor that it has already created.

The second floor is in worse repair than the first, but it has obviously been more heavily used. In the center of the single large chamber, about 20 feet from the stairs, stand twelve tall glass cylinders, each big enough to contain a standing man. The nearest of these is filled with a dark, swirling, greenish slime that seems to be the source of the greenish glow.

Beyond the cylinders is a device made of whirling gears and Jacob's ladders. Liquids burble within it, and vents leak foul vapors into the air. The contraption has no obvious power source, but it is covered in glowing runes, and cerulean energy arcs from one part of it to another. The device is about the size of a small car, and its form suggests that it was designed to crush or slice heavy materials. A long tube from one end of the machine connects to an empty glass cylinder.

Creatures: The abyssal machine and its first satanic ichor are in this room. The machine is a horrendous combination of arcane and technology—a demonic spirit bound to rusting gears and enchanted tubes. It can create one satanic ichor for every week of continuous operation, but one living, sentient creature must be sacrificed to it each month to keep it functional. Despite its demonic spirit, the machine is an object rather than a creature for combat purposes. Thus, it cannot attack.

The satanic ichor is the slime filling the first 6-foot glass tube. The arcane symbols and wax that seal the tube secure its prison.

Abyssal Machine: Hardness 10, 180 hp. The machine can be disabled with a successful *dispel magic* against the sand mage's caster level (7th).

Advanced Satanic Ichor: CR 10; Medium-size ooze; HD 8d10+36; hp 80; Mas —; Init -1; Spd 10 ft., climb 10 ft., fly 20 ft. (average); Defense 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11 (-1 Dex, +2 natural); BAB +6; Grap +9; Atk +9 melee (1d6+3 plus special, slam); Full Atk +9 melee (1d6+3 plus special, 2 slams); FS 10 ft. by 10 ft.; Reach 10 ft.; SQ blindsight 120 ft., corrupt the mind (DC 18), immunity to weapon damage (except energy), ooze, telepathy 100 ft., vessel of flesh (DC 18); AL evil; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +5, AP 0; Rep +0; Str 17, Dex 9, Con 15, Int 18, Wis 17, Cha 18.

Skills: None.

Feats: None.

Blindsight (Ex): Satanic ichor is blind but can ascertain all creatures and objects within 120 feet by nonvisual means. Beyond that range, all targets have total concealment with respect to it.

Corrupt the Mind (Su): As an attack action, a satanic ichor can dominate any creature it can contact telepathically (as the *domination* psionic power manifested by a 10th-level Telepath). A successful DC 18 Will save negates the effect and protects the creature against further domination attempts by the same satanic ichor for 24 hours. Satanic ichor trapped within a container typically uses a dominated creature as a vessel (see below) or thrall to attract other potential thralls.

Telepathy (Su): A satanic ichor can communicate with any creature within 100 feet that has a language.

Vessel of Flesh (Su): If it succeeds on an attack roll against a living creature, a satanic ichor can enter the target's body through one or more orifices (usually the mouth, nostrils, or ears) or an open wound. The target gets a DC 18 Will save to keep the satanic ichor from entering and taking control of its body. If the save fails, the satanic ichor seizes control of the creature's body, using it as a vessel to commit murder and other atrocities. A *remove curse* spell can expel satanic ichor from a creature's body, but the caster must succeed on a level check (1d20 + caster level) or the spell fails. The creature possessed by satanic ichor has no memory of the possession once the satanic ichor is expelled. If the host drops to 0 or fewer hit points, the satanic ichor inside spills out through the mouth, ears, and nostrils and tries to commandeer a new "vessel" as quickly as possible.

While possessing a creature, a satanic ichor cannot be attacked directly.

A living creature possessed by satanic ichor takes 1d2 points of Constitution damage per day, or 1d6 points per day if the satanic ichor's size category is larger than its host's. The Constitution damage cannot be healed until the satanic ichor is expelled.

Tactics: The ichor uses every means at its disposal to gain its independence. It first tries to use its corrupt the mind ability to force a hero to free it (by breaking the tube or the wax seal). If that tactic fails, it speaks to the heroes via telepathy and tries to trick them into releasing it. Once freed, it attacks everything and anything it can reach, including the undead that created it.

Anyone attempting to destroy the abyssal machine draws the wrath of the etoile revenant. The creature arrives in a rage (if regenerated or not yet defeated) and summons any sand slaves left on the island as backup.

Development: Once the heroes have destroyed the abyssal machine and the satanic ichor and defeated all the undead on the island, the evil force dissipates, leaving Remorte cleansed.

REWARDS

The heroes gain the standard experience and wealth awards associated with these encounters. In addition, you may wish to award bonus experience for any investigative work they did at the beginning of the adventure. Depending on how well they were able to piece the clues together themselves, investigation can be the equivalent of up to a CR 12 obstacle.



CONTINUING THE ADVENTURE

If the etoile and its sand mage escape with their machine, they leave behind arcane formulas on the walls and several machine pieces on the floor. Based on this evidence, investigators can piece together what was in the manor, or at least realize that some form of infernal device was built there.

If the heroes try to hunt down the escaped villains, you can re-use areas 6–8 in whatever new location they set up. Even if the characters don't manage to locate the etoile and its minion on their own, they may be drawn to the new locale when reports of satanic ichors begin appearing in some new place. If even that fails to draw them in, new sand slave ghouls and/or demonic machines may come and attack them, since the etoile revenant sees them as a threat.

If the heroes manage to clear Remorte of its undead and destroy the abyssal machine, they become local heroes. The resort company offers them free bungalows, and folks in nearby towns consider them trustworthy. Remorte can become their base of operations in this part of the world, and the purchase DC for anything they wish to buy in nearby towns is reduced by one.

The heroes also attract the attention of the fraal and etoile, though neither group makes its presence known to them. They are simply added to the list of humans that the aliens keep an eye on, though the fraal might consider asking them for help if they encounter another undead alien or mystic problem. The etoile see the heroes as major defenders of humanity and make plans to neutralize them when the time to conquer the Earth comes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Owen Kirker Clifford Stephens was born in 1970 in Norman, Oklahoma. He attended the TSR Writer's Workshop held at the Wizards of the Coast Game Center in 1997 and moved to the Seattle area in 2000, after accepting a job as a game

designer at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Fourteen months later, he returned to Oklahoma with his wife and three cats to pick up his freelance writer/developer career. His credits include author and coauthor credits on numerous *Star Wars* and *EverQuest* projects, as well as *Bastards and Bloodlines* from Green Ronin. He also has producer credits for various IDA products, including the Stand-Ins printable figures.

Credits

Design:	Owen K. C. Stephens
Editing:	Penny Williams
Typesetting:	Nancy Walker
Cartography:	Rob Lazzaretti
Creative Direction:	Christopher Perkins
Web Production:	Julia Martin
Web Development:	Mark A. Jindra
Graphic Design:	Cynthia Fliege, Sean Glenn

This d20™ System game uses mechanics developed for the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS® game by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Rich Baker, and Peter Adkison. This game also uses mechanics developed for the *Psionics Handbook* by Bruce R. Cordell, the *Call of Cthulhu® Roleplaying Game* by Monte Cook and John Tynes, and the *Star Wars® Roleplaying Game* by Bill Slavicsek, Andy Collins, and JD Wiker. d20 MODERN, D&D and DUNGEONS & DRAGONS are registered trademarks, and d20 and the d20 System logo are trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc., a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc. All Wizards characters, character names, and the distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks owned by Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

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