



**DIE,  
GRAVE ROBBER,  
DIE!**

**Die, Grave Robber, Die** © 2022 Michael Van Vleet

First Edition, February 2022

Layout by A.J. Summers using design elements by Max V

This book was laid out using Affinity Publisher by Serif and uses the fonts Gentium Book Basic, Bodoni MT, and VVDS Le Bonjour

### Artists

Cover, Phantom Limb and Stitched Guardian artwork © 2022 RAPIDPUNCHES (twitter: @rapidpunches) and used with permission

Skull and bones spot illustration © 2022 Evlyn Moreau and used with permission

Ash composite © 2022 A.J. Summers and used with permission

Graphic elements from the British Library, pixabay.com, pexels.com and unsplash.com

Pexels.com: Ash silhouette from a photo by Eunhyuk Ahn

Pixabay.com: Cigarettes from a photo by christels; coffin by niyosstudio

#### Unsplash credits

Angel: Marek Studzinski @jccards

Birds in tree: mahdi karimi @mahdi3953

Statues: Audrey Amaro @audreyannamaro

Flying birds over tree: Natalia Y @foxfox

Tombstone silhouettes: Scott Rodgeron @scottrodgeron

Soiled hands: Chris Yang @chrisyangchrisfilm

Tunnel: Tony L @tonylonder

Chessboard: ESMA // 에스마 @esima1311

This work is based on Trophy (trophyrpg.com), product of Jesse Ross and Hedgemaze Press, and licensed for our use under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Trophy is adapted from Cthulhu Dark with permission of Graham Walmsley.

Trophy is also based on Blades in the Dark (found at <http://www.bladesinthedark.com/>),

product of One Seven Design, developed and authored by John Harper, and licensed for our use under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/>).

Trophy™ is a trademark of Hedgemaze Press. The Rooted in Trophy Logo is © Hedgemaze Press, and is used with permission.

# DIE, GRAVE ROBBER, DIE!

## CONTENTS

HOW TO PLAY - 2

CHARACTER CREATION - 6

CONDITIONS - 8

RING 1 - 11

RING 2 - 14

RING 3 - 16

RING 4 - 18

RING 5 - 21

## CONTENT WARNING

cadavers, maggots, rats, blood, cannibalism, bugs, electrical shock, body horror, desecration, scatology, crime



# HOW TO PLAY

Die, Grave Robber, Die! uses the Trophy Dark RPG system. If you've never played Trophy Dark before, don't worry. We've included all of the rules, so you have everything you need to tell a thrilling, horrifying story with friends.

Trophy Dark is a collaborative storytelling game about a group of adventurers on a doomed expedition in a hostile world. It requires one game master (GM) to moderate the game and portray the dangers of the world, and one or more players to portray the adventurers. It is very likely that all the adventurers will die or— at best— be permanently scarred and haunted, destroyed by their desire. A game of Trophy takes about 3–4 hours.

You may also consider splitting your game into two sessions: in session 1, include character creation and rings 1 & 2, then return with your next session to complete rings 3 through 5.

## DICE

Your game will use two different colors of 6-sided dice: light dice and dark dice. Light dice are typically less risky, whereas dark dice are typically more risky. Players may make rolls using dice of just one type or the other, but it's common to roll one or two of each during a single roll. The individual rolls (described below) will tell you which dice to use when.



## RISK ROLLS

When your character attempts a risky task, say what you hope will happen and then ask the GM and the other players what could possibly go wrong. Then gather 6-sided dice.

- ◇ Take one light-colored die if the task is something your character would be able to do because of one of their Skills. You only get 1 light die, even if multiple Skills apply.
- ◇ You may take another light die if you accept a Devil's Bargain from another player or the GM. Devil's Bargains are described in the following section.
- ◇ Add a dark-colored die if you are willing to risk your character's mind or body in order to succeed. You must include this die whenever your character uses a Ritual ability or when the GM says it applies.

If you do not have a relevant skill, the only way you can earn dice to roll is by accepting a Devil's Bargain or risking your mind and body by including a dark die.

Roll the dice. If your highest die is a:

- ◇ **1–3:** Your character fails and things get worse. The GM describes how. The GM may also allow your character to succeed, but things will get worse in some other way.
- ◇ **4–5:** Your character succeeds, but there's some kind of complication. The GM describes the complication, then you describe how your character succeeds.
- ◇ **6:** Your character succeeds. Describe how or ask the GM to describe it.

*Note: If your highest rolled value is on a dark die and that dark die's value is higher than your current Ruin, your Ruin score increases by 1. The GM will define a Condition that demonstrates how the world is warping you. It is possible to succeed at what you intend to do and incur Ruin at the same time.*

If you are unhappy with your roll, and your highest die is a light-colored die, you may add an additional dark die to your dice and re-roll. You may keep adding more dark dice and re-rolling until you're satisfied, or until your highest die is a dark die.

If you use a Risk Roll to try to defeat a monster in hand-to-hand combat, you will die. Instead, roll to hide, roll to escape, or roll to use a Ritual ability against it. If you fight something that is not monstrous or if you fight a monster but not to defeat it (for example, to fight your way past it), be clear about what you want from the fight then roll normally.

## DEVIL'S BARGAINS

The GM or any other player can offer you a bonus light die if you accept a Devil's Bargain. Common Devil's Bargains include:

- ◇ Causing collateral damage or unintended harm
- ◇ Getting lost or separated from their companions
- ◇ Sacrificing an important item
- ◇ Betraying a companion
- ◇ Attracting unwanted attention

The Devil's Bargain occurs regardless of the outcome of the roll. You make the deal, pay the price, and get the bonus die.

The Devil's Bargain is always a free choice. If you don't like one, just reject it (or suggest how to alter it so you might consider taking it). You can always just risk your character's mind or body and take a dark die instead.

Anyone may veto or suggest alterations to a proposed Devil's Bargain, especially if it would also impact their character.

## HELP ROLL

If another player is making a roll that includes a dark die, you may offer to help them before, or even after, their roll. If they accept, describe how you expose yourself to danger and then roll a single light die.

Your roll is considered alongside theirs when determining the success of their action. (More than one player can choose to contribute to a roll in this way.)

However, if your light die's value matches the value on any of their dark die, you must mark 1 Ruin. The GM will describe a Condition that demonstrates how the incursion is changing you... making things worse.

You can only incur 1 Ruin maximum when helping a single action, no matter how many rerolls are involved.



## CONTEST ROLL

If two players are struggling with each other to achieve the same goal, they must first agree on what's at stake. Then, they'll gather dice.

- ◇ Take one light die if you have a Skill that applies to the contest (1 maximum)
- ◇ Take one light die for each point of Ruin you have
- ◇ Take one dark die if the contest is deadly or dangerous
- ◇ Take as many additional dark dice as you wish

Count all 6s rolled. Whoever has the most 6s, wins. (In a tie, count the next highest number, descending, etc.)

For each dark die that rolled a 1, mark 1 Ruin. There is no maximum amount of Ruin you may incur in one roll. Your GM will describe how the Ruin affects you.

## RUIN ROLL

Your Ruin shows how much physical and mental harm your character has suffered. It starts at 1, plus 1 for each Ritual you start the game with.

When your character witnesses or undergoes something disturbing, make a Ruin Roll by rolling one dark die.

If your dark die rolled **higher** than your current Ruin, add 1 to your Ruin and work with the GM to describe the decline of your character's mind and body.

## REDUCTION ROLL

When your Ruin reaches 5, you may now reduce it by acting in the interests of the forest: destroying treasure, preventing the use of Rituals, or sabotaging the other characters' success. You should do these acts in a way that does not draw attention to yourself. The more it looks like an accident or simple bad luck, the better.

Roll 1 light die. If you get **less than** your current Ruin, your character succeeds and their betrayal is unnoticed. You decrease your Ruin by 1.

If you rolled **higher than or equal** to your Ruin, you may still choose to reduce your Ruin by 1, but someone will notice your attempted betrayal. You may continue reducing your Ruin in this way when your Ruin drops below 5.

## LOSING YOUR CHARACTER

When your Ruin reaches 6, your character is lost. This is an important moment: Everyone focuses on your character's last flashes of lucidity before they run away or turn against their companions.

Hand your character over to the GM to control, and either create a new character or exit the game.



# CHARACTER CREATION

- ◇ Give your character a name and a set of pronouns.
- ◇ Build your character's background by selecting one (1) option from each of the Occupations, Backgrounds and Drives lists, or create your own in collaboration with your GM.
- ◇ Your starting Ruin is 1.
- ◇ Select up to three (3) Rituals, but each one you select increases your Ruin by 1. Use any listed below.
- ◇ That's it! You're ready to go!

## OCCUPATION (AND SKILLS)

- Groundskeeper (skilled in duty, stimulants, awareness)
- Professional Mourner (skilled in performance, grief, ritual)
- Grave Robber (skilled in crime, labor, stealth)
- Medical Student (skilled in alcohol, debt, medicine)
- Rat Catcher (skilled in traps, vermin, cursing)
- Bare-Knuckle Brawler (skilled in fisticuffs, stamina, intimidation)



## BACKGROUND (AND SKILLS)

- Unreliable Lamplighter (skilled in darkness)
- Self-Hating Ghoul/Bone-Eater (skilled in hunger)
- Anosmic Privy Shoveler (skilled in fortitude)
- Ectoplasmic Medium (skilled in incarnation)
- Homesick Exile (skilled in melancholy)
- Hemophiliac Tattoo Artist (skilled in skin)

## DRIVES

- Replace your failing liver with a geist-plug
- Convince your cursed dagger to choose a new owner
- Repurchase your ancestral home, or failing that, burn it down
- Identify and expunge every Faeborn changeling passing as human
- Seek Soft-Hook Salt and complete your ritual scarification
- Find and restore Deep Lylout-Under-Barrow
- Found an orphanage for all outcast Weepers



## RITUALS

- Alas (appease a spirit via eulogy)
- Arise (animate a once-living thing, briefly)
- Ashes (cremate a handful of matter)
- Ambient (quiet the area around you)
- Affix (conjoin two things irreversibly)
- Bind (hold a person or animal in place)
- Channel (allow a spirit to act through you)
- Hollow (push a spirit from its own body)
- Inhabit (possess a person or animal)
- Project (observe a remote location in spirit form)
- Summon (draw a known spirit or person to you)



# CONDITIONS

## THEY'RE COMING TO GET YOU

Used to be you planted someone in the dirt, they had the decency to stay there. An enemy you thought was dead has returned and is in pursuit. What tipped you off?

### *It gets worse...*

- ◆ They're taunting you: A sign placed in your path, letting you know they were here. A mocking laugh from nearby that no one else notices. A note slipped in your pocket in clever imitation of your own handwriting. When entering any new space, you must locate the proof they got here ahead of you to feel safe and vigilant.
- ◆ They seem to have eyes everywhere. You no longer feel safe in wide open spaces where you're too easily seen.
- ◆ You're going to need to travel light to stay ahead of them. Stash everything you're carrying. *Everything*. Somewhere they can't find it.

## THE BROTHER IN YOUR POCKET

You had hoped that he was well-fed enough to stay quiet, but your tiny brother, made of sticks, skin and hunger, is awake in your pocket and craving meat. You two are bound: if he gets hurt or hungry, you do as well.

### *It gets worse...*

- ◆ He's moaning now, when you need him to be quiet. The others wouldn't understand and would beat you both to death if your brother were revealed. To keep him quiet, let your brother chew on your hand... or any other convenient meat.
- ◆ He's getting bigger in there. Squirring. Your pocket sags, noticeably. You must support his weight with one arm at all times.
- ◆ Your brother doesn't need you anymore. He wrenches free from you, jagged stick fingers curling into claws, a jagged meat mouth yawning. Born anew. You've spawned a monster.

## THE PHANTOM LIMB

An itch on your dominant arm draws your attention to a ridge of scars: stitches along the forearm, the dotted trace of staples on gray flesh. What selfish, rash action led to the loss of your limb? Do you remember the debt you accrued when your limb was replaced?

### *It gets worse...*

- ◆ Your dominant hand goes numb, though it twitches like a sleeping dog dreaming of running. You're forced to rely on your non-dominant hand.



- ◆ Your stitched-on hand wants its dominance back. It reaches for things of its own accord... dangerous things. You'll need to monitor and actively resist its strange desires.
- ◆ Alien memories from your stitched-on hand flood your mind. It remembers a debt that must be paid. One of your traveling companions must die... at its hand.

## THE BELL TOLLS FOR THEE

You're a driven individual, so you're not going to let a little thing like dying slow you down. But you can feel it coming. A cold grip on your bones. Muscles tightening as rigor sets in. For now, your fists can beat some flexibility back into your flesh, bending stiff limbs when they won't behave.

### *It gets worse...*

- ◆ Something inside you has gone rotten. Foul vapors escape from both ends of you, and others can't bear to be close to you.
- ◆ Fluids seep from you as internal structures and organs begin to fail and burst. The eyes in your skull-like face weep constantly. Your garments darken. You're easily tracked by the puddling left in your wake.
- ◆ You lose your voice and become as quiet as the grave, a silent revenant able only to gesture weakly... and weep.

# GONE, FORGOTTEN

When grief and anger are too great, sometimes forgetting is a mercy. The emotions that fuel you are too much for your companions. In moments of stress— and there are so many— they ignore you like a painful memory, forget the things they've promised you.

## *It gets worse...*

- ◆ The effect is constant. You can be talking to someone one moment and the moment they look away, the thought of you leaves them, like tears down a cheek.
- ◆ You're becoming harder to perceive, as grief camouflages you, diffusing you into the environment. Should you require assistance, you may find your companions are unable to find you, even if you're inches away.
- ◆ If others can't perceive you, then you're free to move in the world as you wish and destroy without consequence! Rage against your invisibility! Make them see and feel damage in your wake, a furious corona around your absence!



# RING 1

## MOMENTS

- ◇ A gust of wind blows across the graveyard, setting tiny bells perched above graves to ringing. Below each bell, a string descends into the earth to a coffin. The bells are insurance for those terrified of being buried alive, so they can ring for help. It's impossible to know in this wind-blown din if any bell is being rung in earnest. **When was the last time a debauch plunged you into a catatonic state so deep you could have easily found yourself below ground yourself, fingernails clawing against a coffin's lid?**
- ◇ An old woman, dressed in black, stands among the mourners, her mouth a too-perfect O of grief. **What about the tenor of her crying, the twisting of her handkerchief, leads you to doubt her sincerity?**

## TERRORS

The robbers were clever.

The grave looks secure, its heavy iron mortsafe still intact above a heavy marble slab. There had been no hasty attack from above with shovels and pickaxes, leaving mounds of scattered dirt and rock by a gaping hole. Oh no.

The point of entry was dozens of yards away, on the other side of a stone fence. Grave robbers— *resurrectionists*— crafted a narrow tunnel from outside the graveyard, then traveled underground like rats until they could shatter the coffin at its head and pull the cold body out.

One of the grave robbers is caught: an old man with only eight fingers remaining. Too old for this game, really. The crowd wheels him about with furious blows to his head and his spindly raised arms.

“Where is the body?” they shout at the old man. “Where did they take it?” The bereaved family— summoned graveside in a fury— wants blood, blacked eyes, cracked bones and teeth. Revenge!

The body thief wails. “We were to take the body to Dr. Galfani! To the Flayed House!” he says, begging mercy.

*Galfani...* a medical scholar and a butcher! A wealthy misanthrope, rarely



seen, whose Flayed House blights the sloping hill above the town!

The cry goes up: a bounty for the body's safe return! The family patriarch nods as money is pressed into his hands, pledges to fund a rescue attempt for the poor, lost Beloved.

Nearby, a young bravo weeps on the mortsafe over the grave and threatens to fight any cowards who won't pursue the thieves. Emotions run high as the crowd seeks either saviors or more targets for their wrath.

**How do you respond when the crowd's attention turns to you? Or when the young bravo casts doubt on your sincerity, claiming that once you're out of sight, you'll vanish into the fog to spend the bounty on your own pleasures instead?**



**The Beloved still had it.** It was meant for you, but they were buried with it. *It was meant for you!* Thanks to those grave robbers, it's back above ground now and that's one step closer to being back in your hands.

- ◇ What precious item was buried with the Beloved to keep it away from you?
- ◇ What crime have you committed already, so far undiscovered, to secure your claim to it?

**The Beloved's name was Ash.  
Like the taste in your mouth.**

## TEMPTATIONS

### Who was the Beloved?

Ask each player to respond to one of the following prompts:

**The Beloved died tragically young, still beautiful.** Looking at them, one was torn between wanting to be around them or wanting to be them.

- ◇ What about their features was most charming?
- ◇ What prevented you from ever speaking to them, in life?

**The Beloved died surrounded by loved ones.** Their room was dark and their bed was soft.

- ◇ How was it that you were allowed entrance to this place of soft breaths and long hours?
- ◇ What memento did you pocket so you'd remember what it was like: the waiting in darkness?

**The Beloved was kind. Kinder than most.** When all had turned against you and you were at your lowest, the Beloved aided you. They thought little of it, but to you it was everything. A gift. Dignity.

- ◇ What persecution had you earned by your deeds and with what kind words did they provide you shelter?
- ◇ In a fit of selfishness, how did you undo their kindness?

**The Beloved needed to know.** You're too late, an urgent communication for the Beloved on your person. You've just arrived, luggage at your feet, a traveling cloak still around your shoulders.

- ◇ What message were you bringing to them? Why were you chosen to deliver it?
- ◇ What quaint oasis on the road seduced you to tarry, adding a few dawdling days to your travel time?



# RING 2

## MOMENTS

- ◇ Unbidden, the lyrics to a song come back to you, but you can't quite remember how the song went.

♪ If I go, when I go, as old as I will be  
Let devils grab my white hair, I'll go bald and I'll go free  
If I go, when I go, as rich as I will be  
Let devils melt down all my gold to make a damn'd Trophy  
I'll be poor and I'll be free  
Don't you cry 'cause I'll be free ♪

**What do your people say happens to the dead when they die?**

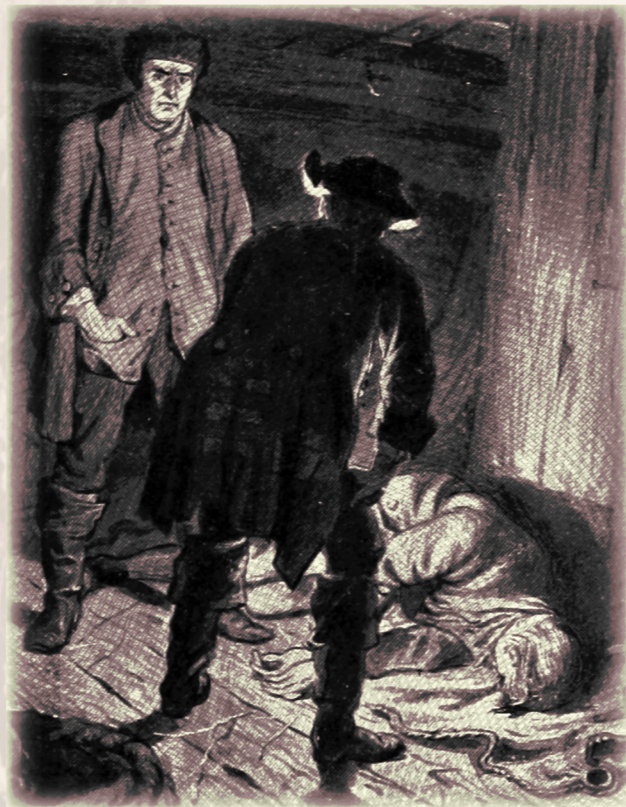
- ◇ A dead rat, eyes gone, ribs showing. Its legs wiggle as if it's trying to right itself... an illusion caused by squirming maggots pushing the limbs from below, so pale they almost glow.

## TERRORS

With ropes lashed around his sunken chest and his white-whiskered throat, the captured and beaten resurrectionist leads you among stone vaults and funereal statuary, pointing out tread marks here and there in the mud that mark the escape route followed by his grave-robbing companions. The trail leads to a receiving vault: a structure used in winter to store the dead until spring when the ground is soft enough for digging.

Inside the vault: darkness and stale incense. A section of the back wall falls away, revealing a hidden entrance to a lightless tunnel with soil walls. Torches are made ready.

**How do you determine who enters first to face any traps left behind? Who stands last in the vault, wrestling with the urge to flee rather than enter that claustrophobic space?**



- ◇ The tunnel's ceiling is low and the path sometimes dips below the water table, forcing you to navigate opaque pools of still water that smell of fungal damp. The moist walls drip.
- ◇ The tunnel doesn't run straight, branching without warning. Some sections of roof sag, requiring progress on bellies and elbows.
- ◇ How close is the surface from where you are? Are those... voices? Overheard somehow through the soil? **If you listen, what do you hope to hear?** While your head is cocked, an earwig drops directly into your ear's canal, eager to squirm its way into a new warm home.
- ◇ Black eyes in the dim light! **RATS!** Biting teeth and shadows made huge by your flickering torches! Bodies without number! The smell of wet fur and blood!
- ◇ When torches gutter and extinguish, and the tunnels feel like they're closing in: **Who struggles to breathe? What monster of your past suddenly feels impossibly close in the dark?**



## TEMPTATIONS

A grate slides away and your eyes adjust. The tunnel has led you directly into the basement of the Flayed House. None come here uninvited. The cellar smells of astringent, preservatives, black creeping mold. Medical exhibits and experiments crowd the dimly lit space.

- ◆ A preserved human skin, tattooed shoulder-to-ankle with pigmented demons, multi-mouthed faces snarling and fighting in a tempest.
- ◆ A jar contains a rooster, vertically bisected, with human teeth implanted in the comb on its head.
- ◆ A giant's skeleton, humpbacked and twisted, stands on display. A name plate on the exhibit reads KIND. **Which of you knew this giant when they were alive?** They had made plain their wish to be buried at sea, but here they are. When you rowed their shrouded body out to cast them into the water, you were followed. **Were you an inattentive fool who didn't notice when your friend's body was fished back out of the water? Or an accomplice, bribed to look the other way? What, if anything, do you owe your friend now?**

Piled gunny sacks spill treasures stolen from the dead, kept here in the home of someone so rich as to be unimpeachable. Rings, timepieces, gold teeth that bear the marks of tools that tug... the product of years of shadowy labor, left uncovered with no fear of discovery or retribution. The laws you're accustomed to hold no sway here.

Overhead, an unnoticed threat: a lit chandelier ringed with twitching human hands. The hands are powered by electricity, allowing the chandelier to lower itself and move about freely, the animated hands grabbing and restraining anything unfamiliar.



# RING 3

## A Note for the GM

The human bodies on display in the Flayed House appear, at first glance, to be merely preserved and positioned. However, each flayed body is rigged to the House's power grid and can move and speak independently with some effort. Not all of them will be coherent. They cannot move far without losing their connection to the house's power.

## MOMENTS

- ◇ The walls are lined with the heads of taxidermied creatures: stags, elk, bear, a shaggy lion, a row of hunting hounds with medallions around their necks. The overhead lights flicker, and glassy eyes seem to follow your progress. A trick of the light? **Which long-lost pet do you spy, its mounted head coated in dust, its features showing signs of disrepair? How did you mourn it when it vanished?**
- ◇ A popping sound from somewhere unseen, as of many knuckles being cracked at once.

## TERRORS

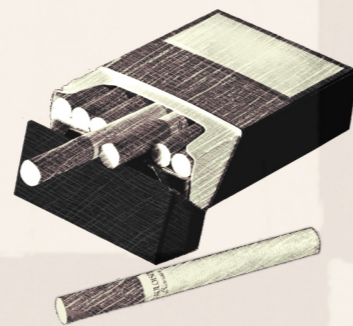
A bit of grave dirt stains the stairs leading up to the first floor and another exhibition room. Precisely placed lamps illuminate tableaux of flayed human bodies, preserved and posed as if still engaged in the pursuits of the living. Some figures have pins sticking out of them holding scientific labels in place... or mocking comments.

There is a heavy locked door between this room and the upstairs.

**The Docent:** In a glass case, a pair of blackened lungs float in a preservative fluid. Wires run through the fluid, giving off soft blue sparks. The lungs twitch as if still struggling to breathe. In front of the display: an ornate ashtray of jade and a silver box containing hand-rolled cigarettes. When someone gets close enough, a buzzing voice says: "Got... a... light?" There's a soft mouthlike orifice mounted at the top of the case that can form a seal around a lit cigarette.

The Docent can tell the treasure hunters the following:

- ◆ The Docent is in pain. Cigarettes help.
- ◆ Dr. Galfani observes this exhibit room remotely.
- ◆ There's a key to leave this room available if you defeat the Chess Player (controlled remotely by Galfani).

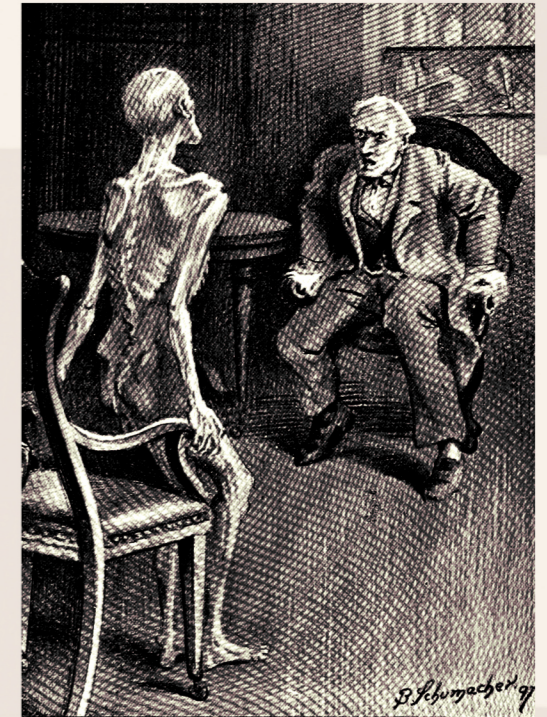


One of the bodies on display here belonged to the former Mayor, who you know was buried with ceremonial pomp in a locked vault. **What pose have they been set in that mocks their former power?**

**The Chess Player:** An unblinking skinless body sits in front of a chess board, eyes like shrunken raisins. A speaker in its open mouth hisses as Galfani speaks through it, addressing a specific adventurer by name: "Are you here to continue our game?" Is this a ruse, or does Galfani know them?

Galfani controls the Chess Player via remote electric stimulation, and refuses to discuss anything but the game. Defeating the Chess Player (however managed) causes a small drawer to pop out of the chess board. Inside, a key that unlocks the door to upstairs. Once defeated, the Chess Player will smoke and burst into flames which spill over the board and spread across the floor.

The character with the lowest Ruin seems unaffected by these horrors. Why? Ask the other players: **Do you think they already knew about this room and these bodies?**



## TEMPTATIONS

The halls of the Flayed House are populated with human bodies, preserved and pinned in place. As you explore, which of these tableaux captures your attention?

**Betrayal by lantern light:** A male body holds a lantern aloft as if peering into darkness. A female figure beside the male points to whatever the lantern would illuminate, while her other hand buries a knife in the man's back.

- ◆ The lantern's light emits from a glass bulb, a dancing faery shape dancing between two thin filaments.
- ◆ Treasure: A button on the knife's hilt, when depressed, causes the blade to spark.

**The gardener, watering:** A flayed figure in a sun hat and brightly colored dress hovers over an artificial plant made of folded paper.

- ◆ Treasure: In the soil, mushrooms with white puffy caps. An herbalist would identify them as Destroying Angels. Poisonous.



**The voyeur and the chamber pot:** A figure crouches behind a bamboo screen, sitting atop a chamber pot. A second glistening skinless body is posed as if spying on them, squinting through a crack in the screen. On examination, the peeping figure's eye is misaligned with the screen's gap.

If the voyeur and screen are moved into alignment, the crouching figure tumbles off its chamber pot. From a hidden speaker, the sound of laughter plays, hissing and crackling as if recorded on vinyl.

- ◆ Treasure: In the chamber pot, a key glistens at the bottom of a pool of blood-streaked liquid, its ridged teeth shaped like a lightning bolt.

# RING 4

## MOMENTS

- ◇ On the wall, a painted portrait in a gilt frame features a woman holding an open book in her left hand, ball lightning cradled in her right. In the painting's background, illuminated by the lightning's blue light, is a reclining Galfani. **Why did your family refuse to speak this woman's name, despite her blood relation? Which of the tableaux of flayed figures passed earlier included a woman dressed as she is dressed in this painting?**
- ◇ On a side table, a novelty toy: a jack-in-the-box in the shape of a coffin. The box plays a jaunty tune as its handle is turned, then a skeleton pops out and dances a tiny jig.



## TERRORS



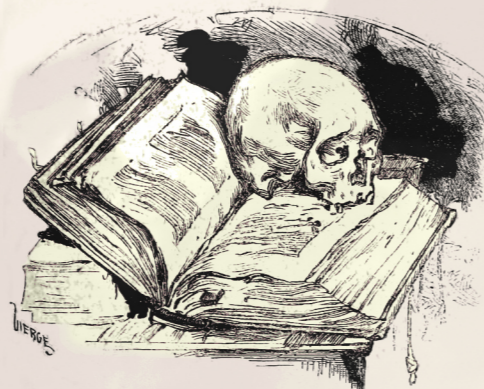
Hallways and empty rooms. Paintings of landscapes where the sky's light is red as blood, or where shadowed wings cut through towering thunderheads amid arcs of lightning. Sketches, anatomical studies, strange limbs extended, twisted.

If it weren't for the occasional smear of grave dirt on expensive carpet, you'd think you were lost.

You enter an enormous chamber the size of a city market, every wall lined with books. The smell of leather and dust. From above, the faint creak of a chandelier, decorated with taxidermied birds flying between glittering wire lightning bolts, like a storm frozen in place.

**What book do you spot on the shelves, known as a work long thought successfully purged, to be burned on sight? What marks this book as the very copy you once hid under the floorboards of your home?**

This book contains a Ritual (Ashes) that can be learned by one person. The second person to try to learn it will find their study interrupted...



**The Stitched Guardian:** From behind, a slow clopping sound, out of place. Hard hooves on wood.

In the shadows, it looks like a horse, but dagger-like tusks break the profile. As it steps into the light, it becomes clear: a human torso stitched to a horse, a mocking parody of a centaur. The human body's shriveled arms are sewn against the ribs, the hands bolted to the side of the head, each hand gripping a hooked dagger. A smaller set of arms are tucked underneath, gripping a small stack of books.

The creature's once-human head, too heavy, sags forward. Functional, dull eyes sway on fleshy stalks that spring from the back of its neck, gazing over the top of the vestigial skull. From its equine chest, a low moan erupts. Books fall to the floor.

The Stitched Guardian charges.

# TEMPTATIONS

You find the bodies of the grave robbers you had been pursuing, torn and smashed to pulp by the Stitched Guardian's heavy hooves and flashing blades. Paper currency coated in blood and brains litters the hallway.

From above, a small bell chimes. A string runs from the top of the bell through a hole above a nearby door. The bell's string, suspended via ceiling-mounted bolts, leads through several strange rooms:

- ◆ **An aquarium:** Tanks line the walls, including one containing a submerged tea party of four flayed bodies in fancy dress. A switch on the wall is placed near a sign: THE TEA PARTY.  
Throwing the switch causes electricity to arc through the water. The tea party lurches into motion: lifting tea cups to lips, then standing, lurching, panicking, banging on the aquarium glass, boiling, cooking, and tearing chunks of their own bodies off.
- ◆ **A sewing room** with baskets of fabric samples, wool and thread, and a healthy human arm resting next to a pristine surgical saw on an embroidered pillow.
- ◆ **A toy room** full of half-human, half-constructed bodies. A woman's torso on a wooden rocking horse. A man's head in the chest of an enormous stuffed bear. Fluff and fluids in storage. All failed experiments.

Along the ceiling, bells dance along the mounted string as it's tugged from its point of origin in an increasingly frantic rhythm.

You open the final door.



# RING 5

## TERRORS

A tiled room echoes with humming, blinking equipment. Purple bolts of electricity arc between paired metal poles, climbing and expiring at the peak. Human limbs jut out from wall mounts, each alongside an electric throw switch. If flipped, the limbs kick and grasp, twisting and contorting into strained positions. The entire back wall is flashing lights and falling sparks.

And here, finally, is Ash... the Beloved.

They are strapped upright, partially inside the back wall, their funeral garb cut open to allow tubing and wires to pass through their body. From the waist down, they're encased in strange, trembling machinery that you can feel through the shuddering floor.

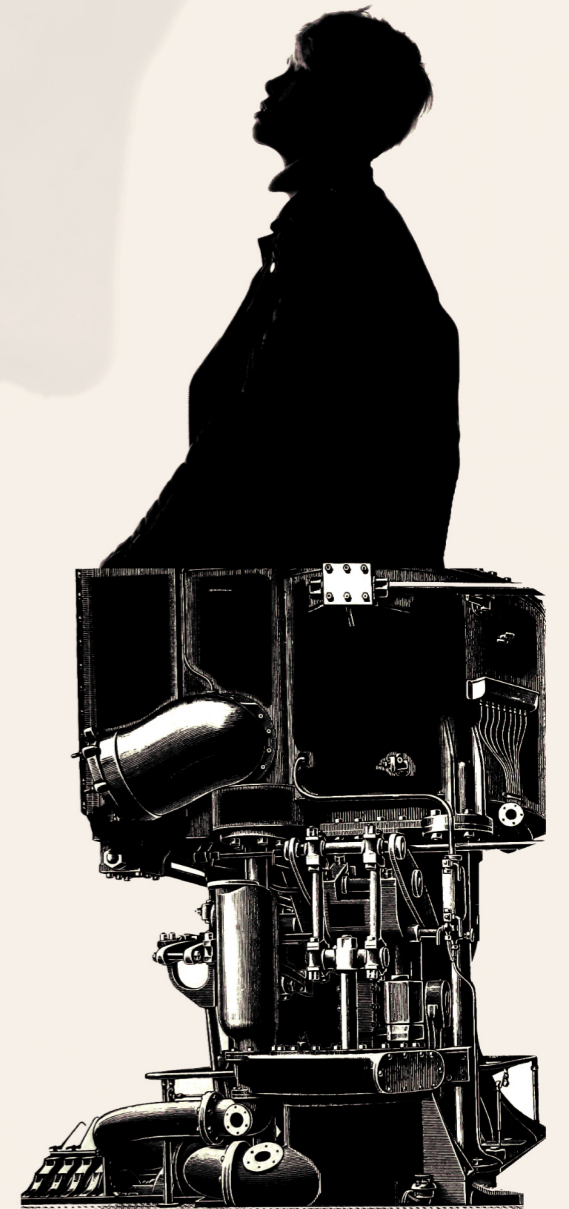
Sparks jump along wires into Ash, who speaks with a croaking, exhausted voice. "Where is Dr. Galfani? I've been ringing. He saved me! I owe him *everything!*"

If asked, Ash knows:

- ◆ Death is nothingness.
- ◆ The doorway back to life is agony.
- ◆ Any attempt to remove them from the Resurrection Cradle will result in an explosion and death.

Ash's concentration flags as lights flicker. The room grows hot and close from the energy expended to keep Ash alive. Their skin is waxy and they slouch, ropy dark drool spilling from their mouth to pool on the tile floor. Their spine audibly pops when they try to look you in the eye.

Whatever this new life is, it's untenable. The Flayed House's power will fail. Meanwhile, Ash's family is waiting for you to bring a dead body back. You could end this false life with a flipped switch... a pulled plug.



# TEMPTATIONS

Dr. Galfani is dead.

In a study lined with medical texts, occult tomes, models of human anatomy, skeletal recreations of impossible creatures, vials of strange fluids (hand-labeled and wax-sealed), the Flayed House's master slumps over an enormous blood-oak desk.

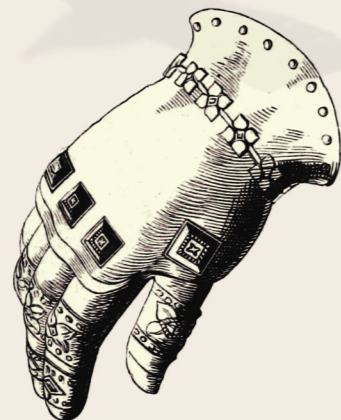


Their hand, frozen with rigor mortis, clutches a cup of wine.

**Treasure:** A book of Galfani's notes and a final, elegiac entry.

The book contains:

- ◆ Instructions for how to reanimate the dead using galvanic spikes driven into flesh. The process requires an unsustainable level of power and offers diminishing returns. Eventually, a body will either burn or crumble.
- ◆ Experiment notes: scores of names, dates, reanimation attempts, fires extinguished, lives extended and destroyed. **What dear friend's name is included here? Who were they that you mourned so long ago, given a second tragic life by Galfani's sparking machinery, only to face death again? Can you hear their voice crying out for you to put this whole place to the torch, to avenge them?**
- ◆ Poems of love addressed to Ash, lamentation and dread, promises of reunion at any cost.



**Galfani's Glove:** In a dais set with dials and sparking cables, a deep opening the size of a human hand. Galfani's book says this device draws blood and "life electricity" to maintain and control the reanimated dead.

Placing a hand in this machine risks body and mind. Any who do so will feel both queerly drained and invigorated. They will sense every animated person and creature in the Flayed House: their moods, locations and the depth of their unslakable thirst for the blood and power required to operate the Glove. This experience invites ruin, but it's also a chance to claim the house.

One could take Galfani's place. Feed the Glove and, by extension, the Flayed House's population. Seize power. Control life and death, for a time. This could all be yours.

Anyone attempting to flee the Flayed House risks being torn apart by its flayed denizens, or trampled by its constructed beasts, scattered and smeared through flickering hallways.

Every crawling thing wants its life to continue... at any cost.

Do you?



## BIOGRAPHY

Michael Van Vleet is best known for his contributions to the Trophy core books and for DEVIL, AIM FOR ME, a Weird West one-shot based on Trophy Dark. He lives in El Cerrito, CA, across the water from the Golden Gate Bridge. El Cerrito used to be called Rust. It was named after a blacksmith. Rust is a terrible name for a blacksmith.

# DIE, GRAVE ROBBER, DIE

RUIN

1

2

3

4

5

6

NAME

PRONOUNS

CONDITIONS

RITUALS

(choose up to 3, increase your Ruin by 1 for each Ritual selected)

- ◇ Alas (appease a spirit via eulogy)
- ◇ Arise (animate a once-living thing, briefly)
- ◇ Ashes (cremate a handful of matter)
- ◇ Ambient (quiet the area around you)
- ◇ Affix (conjoin two things irreversibly)
- ◇ Bind (hold a person or animal in place)
- ◇ Channel (allow a spirit to act through you)
- ◇ Hollow (push a spirit from its own body)
- ◇ Inhabit (possess a person or animal)
- ◇ Project (observe a remote location in spirit form)
- ◇ Summon (draw a known spirit or person to you)

OCCUPATIONS (choose 1)

- ◇ Groundskeeper (duty, stimulants, awareness)
- ◇ Professional Mourner (performance, grief, ritual)
- ◇ Grave Robber (crime, labor, stealth)
- ◇ Medical Student (alcohol, debt, medicine)
- ◇ Rat Catcher (traps, vermin, cursing)
- ◇ Bare-Knuckle Brawler (fisticuffs, stamina, intimidation)

BACKGROUNDS (choose 1)

- ◇ Unreliable Lamplighter (skilled in darkness)
- ◇ Self-Hating Ghoul/Bone-Eater (skilled in hunger)
- ◇ Anosmic Privy Shoveler (skilled in fortitude)
- ◇ Ectoplasmic Medium (skilled in incarnation)
- ◇ Homesick Exile (skilled in melancholy)
- ◇ Hemophilic Tattoo Artist (skilled in skin)

DRIVES (choose 1)

- ◇ Replace your failing liver with a geist-plug
- ◇ Convince your cursed dagger to choose a new owner
- ◇ Purchase your ancestral home, or failing that, burn it down
- ◇ Identify and expunge every Faeborn changeling passing as human
- ◇ Seek Soft-Hook Salt and complete your ritual scarification
- ◇ Find and restore Deep Lylout-Under-Barrow
- ◇ Found an orphanage for all outcast Weepers

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks first and foremost to A.J. Summers, who was instrumental in helping guide this project to completion. Thanks to Jesse Ross and Jason Cordova for their work on Trophy and ongoing support.

Thanks to the entire Cold Hearth Collective (Mags Maenad, Gabriel Robinson, Natalie Ash and Madeleine Ember) and the CHC Discord for soundboarding and signal boosting. Big thanks to Carlie “hotsoupgirl” Lazar for taking me to The Hunterian Museum in London. Lots of inspiration there.

Playtesting thanks are due to Aaron Burkett, Carol Pagán, Brian Sago and David LaFreniere. Shout out to everyone who pitched in looking for typos, including Tori Brovet, Big Ed Barnham and Karla Zimonja. (If you spot any, let me know!)

And finally, thanks to you, dear reader!

**DIE, GRAVE ROBBER, DIE!** is a gothic horror one-shot RPG incursion for Trophy Dark, designed for 3-5 players. A rain-drenched world of horror and open graves awaits! Can you reach the Flayed House in time to rescue a stolen body before it's too late?

