

# Escalation!

THE 13TH AGE FANZINE | FALL 2017

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HORROR

in this issue

**MICHAEL  
WARLOCK  
PRUITT**

next issue

**MARTIN  
PALADIN TALENTS  
KILLMANN**





I'd be lying if I said I hadn't had my fears that we wouldn't get Escalation Issue 1 out to the fans. And that got me to thinking: what fears do the brave adventurers of the Dragon Empire face? I'm not referring to mere challenges. I'm talking about fear and horror. What better time to give them our attention than October?

In this issue, we shine a light on the things that go bump in the Dragon Empire's night. Of course, the light isn't overly bright. It's more like a flashlight, shining on the narrator's face from below, casting eerie shadows. We offer a glimpse at some chilling monsters as well as a new take on a class that has become a staple in fantasy.

We also share the community's thoughts on how to make 13th Age a better fit for the horror genre. When even 1st-level characters are heroic and relatively hard to kill, how do you set the mood of dread and powerlessness that's required to ratchet up the feeling of impending doom?

October is also the first fall month of autumn (for those of us in the Northern Hemisphere, at least). I hope you'll forgive our giving in to the temptation to pepper some of the elements of fall throughout the issue.

I hope you'll turn the lights down, sip a mug of the finest pumpkin spice latte the Dragon Empire has to offer, and enjoy Issue 2 of Escalation.

Gratefully yours,  
Tim Baker



**A**re you finished with that pumpkin spice latte? I hope you enjoyed your trip through some of the horrors that 13th Age has to offer. It was a no-brainer to offer up some horrific and sweet delicacies for the October issue of Escalation. I'm still terrified at the thought of facing that Haunted Gelatinous Cube! Bring me my broadsword and a holy symbol of gold! Horror is a challenging topic for any game, but more so in one dedicated to powerful heroes. This issue offered some helpful insights into how that can be achieved. Kudos to the authors and artist who contributed.

Next issue, during the month of family gatherings, celebration and joy we'll delve into festivals and how they might shape the world of the Dragon Empire, or whatever world setting your game takes places in. There are a plethora of questions to be asked. How do the people of tiny Sun Falls celebrate the prosperity of the year? Does the Priestess hold a spiritual congress in Santa Cora, gathering her flock from far and wide and giving blessings to true believers? What kind of sacrifices are made in temples across the empire to hold back the darkness as the barrier between the world and the abyss grows thin? Many questions.

With that, I'll leave you to ponder. Break out your parkas and manticore fur scarves.

Winter is coming.

Sherm Sheftall  
October 2017

**Escalation is always in need of articles and art! Next issues theme is "Festival." Everyone celebrates something. Tell or show us how they celebrate in the Dragon Empire!**

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As with the walls, levels in 2.5D are representative only and not to scale. The floor of the brew room is actually 30 feet below the level of the walkway.

Cuthbert (human cleric) gets ready to cross the walkway. A few seconds later he triggers the magical trap set by Grayson and gets blasted off the walkway, falling through the rotted floor of one of the beer vats and ending up on the ground in the storage room below.

Rain (wood elf rogue) dusts Jalen while dwarf skeletons clatter up the stairs towards him.

The whole terrain in play. While it does take up a lot more table space than simple theatre of the mind, the models added a fun element to the game that my players really enjoyed.

While Cuthbert is picking himself up off the ground and brushing wood dust and rotten beer dregs off his armour, Wil (human wizard) eyes some ghouls about to break through the bars and readies his Ray of Frost spell.

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Art: Dean Spencer

# HEROIC HORROR

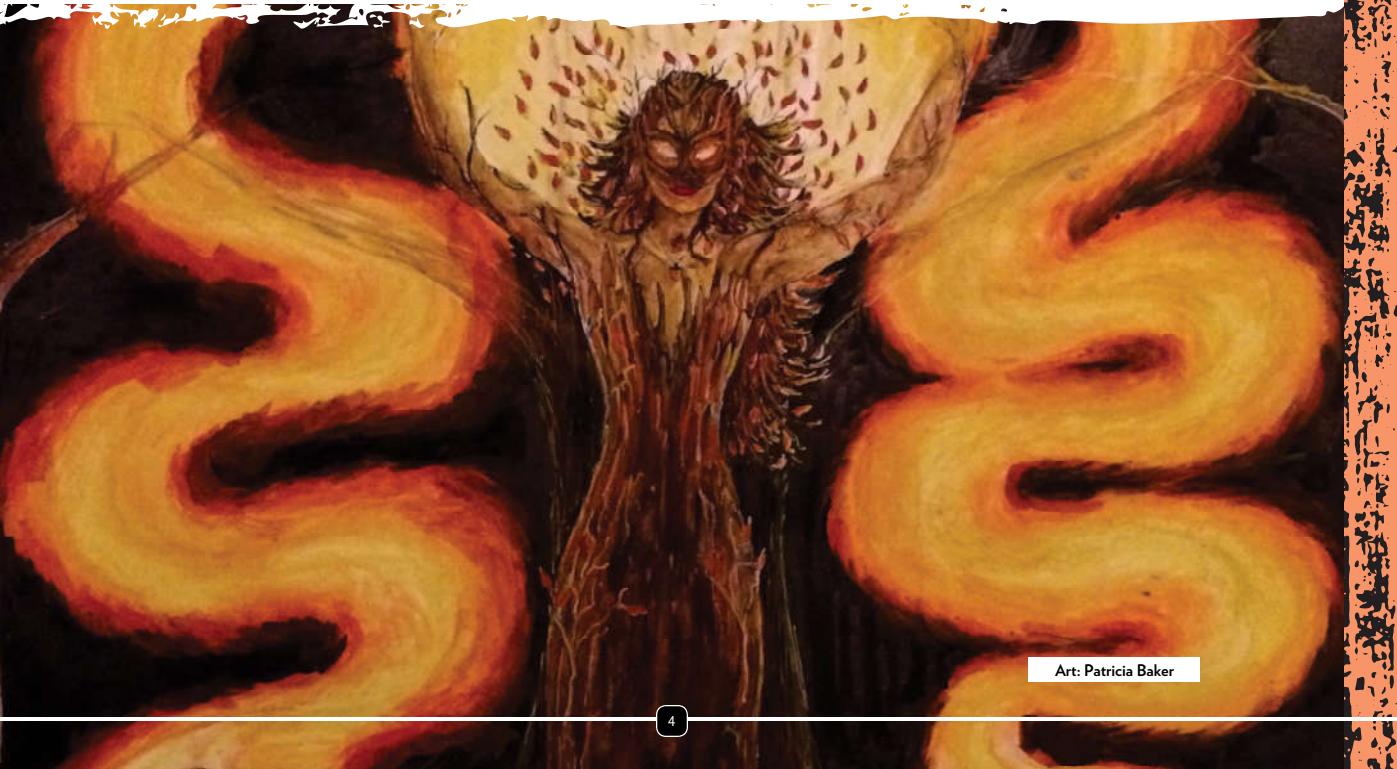
BY Mikhail Bonch-Osmolovskiy  
PonderingsOnGames.com

ARTICLE

**H**orror thrives on uncertainty. On powerlessness. On terrible things happening to the protagonists and those they care about. Irrevocably. Inescapably. It can be the sudden shock of a jump scare, or the growing dread of the catastrophe you know is coming.

13th Age, on the other hand, seems to not really do any of those things. It's heroic fantasy. It's self-aware, not taking itself too seriously, not afraid to be just a bit silly. The protagonists kick down doors and bust heads, reasonably confident in their ability to come out on top. They are powerful, brave, able to reshape the world with the help of Icons. In short, horror and 13th Age don't mix. Or do they?

This is an overview article on introducing horror elements into your game while still keeping it essentially a heroic fantasy. A heroic horror, if you will. It is an assortment of ideas and advice, each of which could have been an article in its own right.



Art: Patricia Baker

## THE OLD BREWERY

*"Located near the wall separating the Saddle from the Docks, the Old Brewery was once the primary distillery and ale-making site for a group of dwarves in town known as the Alemasters. It suited the dwarves' purposes early in the town's history, but demand for their fine ales (including their Hammerblow stout) and strong liquors quickly outpaced what the brewery could produce. That fact, coupled with a few accidents stemming from excessive drunkenness among the workers and construction choices made for easy distribution of the product and not worker safety, soon forced the Alemasters to build a much larger and safer brewery in the Commons. The old brewery continued to be used for experimental brews, but after another handful of accidents, it was finally closed down completely. It remained that way for many years, gaining a reputation for being haunted by all the former workers who had died there. These rumors continued thanks to various vagrants and homeless folk who lived in the place over the years being seen moving about the place at night. Seeing an opportunity, the Seekers moved into the building a few years back, clearing out the riffraff and maintaining the place as a storage facility and sometimes meeting location. The occasional faked spirit sighting, or well-placed knife in the back, has kept both citizens and vagabonds away from the Old Brewery ever since. ... The Old Brewery consists of three main areas: the brew room, the offices and drinking hall, and the storage chambers below the brew room."*

*-(Shadows of Eldolan, pp. 44-45)*



Floor plan of the Old Brewery as depicted in the adventure text.



Offices and drinking hall.



Entrance area and brew room. The narrow walkway crosses over two large beer vats in the room below. I swapped the wooden spiral staircase going down to the brew room floor for a straight one.



Storage room under the brew room. I opted for stairs in place of a the sloping corridor.

# CRAFTING THE OLD BREWERY

BY DAX THOMAS

After a 25-year-long break from running campaigns, I finally made the decision to get back into game mastering. Like most old clothes you pull out from the back of the closet after years of neglect, the GM mantle fit a little bit tighter than I had remembered. So I did what most of us do these days, I hit up YouTube for a refresher course. Browsing the different channels, I came across a few gems that show how to craft your own dungeon tiles, “building fronts”, and “scatter terrain”, to help create a semi-3D map of your encounter area. After watching, literally, hundreds of episodes created by crafters such as DM Scotty (TheDMsCraft), Wyloch (Wyloch’s Crafting Vids), Pillipow (Black Magic Craft), DM G (TheDMGinfo), and Hankerin (Drunkens & Dragons), I was hooked and knew I had to try building something myself for my freshly started *Shadows of Eldolan*<sup>1</sup> first-level adventure. Following is a brief photo description of my take on the Old Brewery as found in Lead 4: Rumney’s Friend, The Saddle (pp.42-48).

The brewery is done in DM Scotty’s 2.5D, large tile style. The idea behind 2.5D is to have a map that represents walls, doors, and other features of a room, dungeon or wilderness area, but does so in a way that doesn’t result in a congested game space or interfere greatly with game play. Some GM crafters, in keeping with certain rule systems, stamp or trace a 1-inch grid on their tiles. But this is 13th Age so, of course, you’ll see no grid here.

Pretty much everything for the brewery is made from cardboard and crafting sticks, with cheapo acrylic paint for detail. The cart in the entranceway, a few of the tables, and the small basins are resin-cast knick-knacks I stumbled across in the 100-yen shop. Everything else is hand-crafted. It was a very inexpensive project and required almost no artistic ability.

For those folks still using dry-erase battlemats or plain ol’ 2D dungeon tiles, I highly recommend checking out the YouTube channels mentioned above and starting out on the adventure of crafting your own 2.5D game terrain. It’s well worth the effort.

There’s not much else to say that pictures can’t say better, so without further adieu, here is the Old Brewery in 2.5D.

<sup>1</sup>Moore, Cal. (2014). *Shadows of Eldolan: A 13th Age adventure for 1st-level characters*. Pelgrane Press Ltd.

First and foremost, players have to be willing to be scared. You are likely sitting in a well-lit room, surrounded by friends and pizza. It’s just not very intimidating. You could go the extra mile and set the mood with dim lighting and spooky music, but the most important part is getting your players to agree to experience horror. How? Easy; talk to them. For that matter, make sure they want to play a horror game. They could have picked 13th Age for its light-hearted monster-bashing fun. Respect that. Ask if there are specific phobias or topics to avoid, and be mindful of something coming up during the game.

As you play, read the room, watch your players. Your goal is to keep them on the edge, especially as the adventure progresses. If one of them is leaning back, texting or is otherwise not engaged, they clearly need more plight. Don’t go over the said edge, though. You want them suffering, but still having fun. A glimmer of hope is often better than utter despair. It gives the characters something to strive for, something to lose.

Don’t be discouraged if, during the game, players keep cracking jokes. Sometimes we use levity to hide our nervousness. And an occasional humorous moment from you can alleviate the tension, making the next hit that much more impactful. Don’t overindulge, though. You are responsible for bringing the game world to life, and what a bleak and horrible place it is.

It’s not enough to just describe the functional details of a scene. Focus on the strange, the unsettling, the disturbing. Infuse the world with a sense of wrongness. Long before the characters are in any danger, let them feel they are no longer safe. And once they are in danger, double your efforts. There is a difference between a zombie and a shambling corpse of a farmer you’ve met just an hour ago, a crow sticking its beak out of an empty eye socket, looking right at you with its beady black eye, skin bulging as another crow crawls underneath. And if he’s been killed and taken over by crows, what happened to his daughter that was playing next to him?..

An implication is often more terrifying than an outright statement. Imagination runs wild into the darkest places. It’s the uncertainty, the hope and fear mixed together.

Another favorite of mine is watching the players realize they’ve been in danger this whole time. They had noticed the crows when they first came here. You had mentioned them in every scene. And now, suddenly, they are not just a decoration.

But what are they? Names have power. Knowing what something is, how it works, gives a sense of control to the players. A zombie is just a zombie. You stab it with a sword. A corpse animated by murderous crows, on the other hand, is something else entirely. What else can they do?

So far all, the advice has been fairly generic, applicable to most horror games. What's different in heroic fantasy - in 13th Age? To start with, it almost entirely lacks permanent consequences, both by design and by tradition. The characters are adventurers. They often have little connection to anyone outside their party - maybe a parent left back on a farm. They move from place to place, driven by plot or profit, going one adventure after adventure. There are stakes, true, but all too often they are framed in binary "win-or-lose" terms. Defeat the giants, or the town is destroyed.

Mechanically - this is even more apparent. Full heal up does just that - the characters are good as new, not a scar on them. At most they may lose a magic item as they adventure, but that's not particularly fun either. Horror or not, it's still a 13th Age game, and cool loot is a part of it.

Characters have to have something to lose. They will likely win in the end as they are still big damn heroes, but how much does the victory cost them? Give them someone to care about, someone to protect. In addition to the locals, NPCs they call upon when they utilize their Icon relationship dice are a good fit. Ideally, you've already been treating them as recurring characters, not just loot and advice dispensers. Now, put them in danger, and mean it. Or, better yet, imply they may be in danger and watch your players squirm.

Do the PCs rush to their rescue, abandoning what they were doing? Are they too far away, powerless to change the outcome? Do they have to choose who to save and just hope things will work out for the others? There's that word again. Hope. Your best friend. Loss is final. Hope, on the other hand, can gnaw at your players for the entire game.

The character sheet is players' last safe refuge. No matter how bad things get, they can rely on their character. And you don't want to mess with that...much. Madness or lasting injury rules are popular in horror games, which makes perfect sense - these are the permanent consequences heroic fantasy lacks. But we are playing heroic fantasy.

So don't take your players' toys away. Give them corrupted toys instead. Offer power at an uncertain cost, then create a situation where PCs feel they need all the help they can get, consequences be damned. 5s on Icon relationship rolls are perfect for this. Or they can take the high road, and suffer for it. "A bad thing has happened to you" is unpleasant, but "a bad thing has happened *because of you*" is so much worse. Which is to say, better.

Here are a couple of examples. That magic item they found? It's cursed. And not in an obvious mechanical disadvantage way, though there's definitely something wrong with it. It has a subtle effect that may not even be noticeable straight away, like a sword that raises those it killed as undead a month later. It can't harm the undead it created, either.

## PURSUIT OF KNOWLEDGE

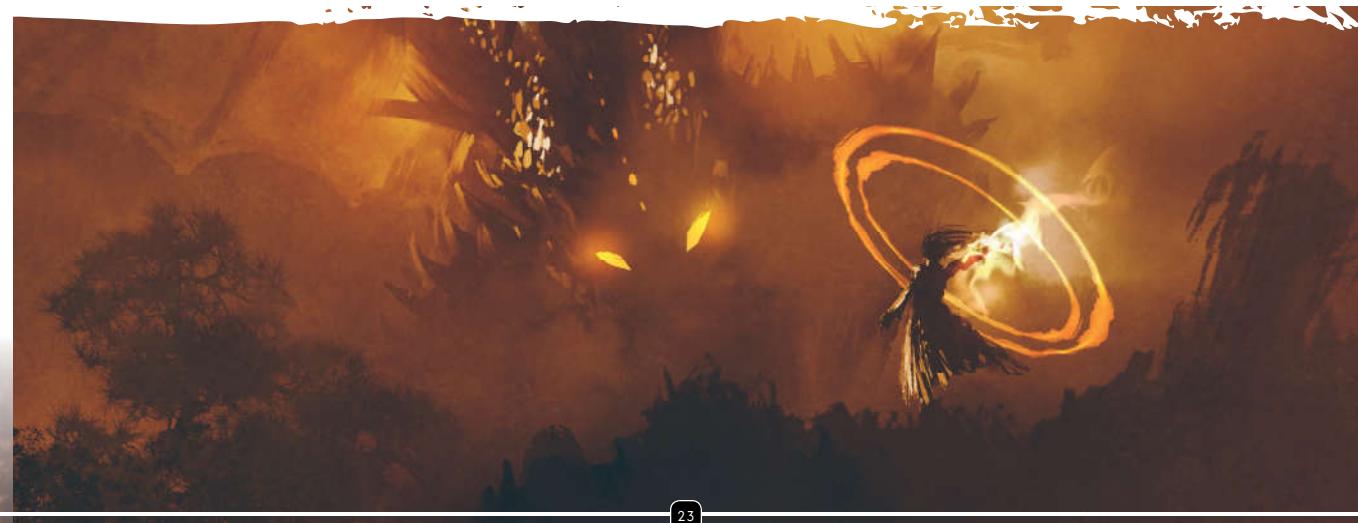
Most warlocks are content to derive all of their magical power through manipulation of others. You are different. You've supplemented the gifts and instruction provided by your patron with your own research and studies. You possess a spellbook, and can cast the spells contained within. You have access to Wizard spells, similar to how spells are provided via a Pact. You are also now a Ritual Caster. Any spell that references Intelligence will use Charisma instead. Patrons do not look kindly on their charge straying so far away from their influence, and as such you have a Negative Icon Relationship with your Patron. However, power once gifted in this fashion cannot be denied. Easily, that is.

## TRIAL BY COMBAT

Unlike most warlocks, you've focused on physical prowess as well as strength of character in order to carry yourself. You no longer have the penalties associated with heavy armor. You now deal your level in miss damage on melee attacks, and no longer provoke attacks of opportunity when using a ranged spell while engaged. Your base number for hit points is now an 8 instead of 6, and your recovery die is now 1d8. These changes are marked with an asterisk in the Warlock tables and progression chart. Additionally, you may begin play with heavy armor instead of light should you wish.

**Adventurer Feat:** You have expanded your skill with weapons, removing the attack penalties associated with any weapons that would typically have them.

**Champion Feat:** You have learned to bend your magical weapons to your purpose and will. You may apply your weapon's attack bonus to your spells as you would a magic implement. 



Elemental Caster talent. Spells known becomes daily spells that can be cast. However, unlike the Druid version of this talent, you only gain access to one of the four elements. You do however, gain the at-will spell without the need for an elemental mastery feat. Adepts have access to an additional element, either through a second patron, or a particularly unusual patron. Any spell that references Wisdom will use Charisma instead.

### **CELESTIAL PACT**

You have bargained with a celestial being of great power. Celestial beings rarely interact with the world through warlocks, as typically their servants are priests and clerics. Your patron may be a rogue element, no long associated with the heavens, such as a fallen angel. You may cast spells from the Cleric spell list. Any spell that references Wisdom will use Charisma instead.

### **OLD MAGIC PACT**

You have bargained with a being of raw magic. Most often these are great dragons, typically chromatic, but not exclusively. However, any being of sufficient magical power may imbue another with a portion of their power. You may cast spells from the Sorcerer spell list.

### **ELDRITCH PACT**

You have bargained with a being beyond reality. Existing beyond description, the abilities it's conferred to you are similarly difficult to describe. You may cast spells from the Chaos Mage spell list. You do not gain access to the Icon Spells. At the beginning of your turn, roll a d6. On a 1, 2, or 3, you only have access to attack spells; on a 4, 5, or 6, you only have access to defense spells.

### **GRAVE PACT**

You have bargained with a being from beyond the grave. Typically, these are Liches of great power, though rarely those in favor with the Lich King. Other great spellcasters have been known to share their knowledge in power from the other side as well, however despite their original abilities, the power is always corrupted as it is passed through to this side. You may cast spells from the Necromancer spell list. Any spell that references Intelligence will use Charisma instead.



Running low on recoveries? You saw the devils you're fighting eat these plump grubs to heal. There it crawls, so juicy it's almost bursting. Eat it, and you get a recovery back. Side effects? Just smile, and ask them to make a note on their character sheet.

And they should be running low on recoveries, because you don't have to pull any punches with your monsters. Nastier specials? All of them and then some. Overwhelming forces? By all means. Remember, players can always choose to escape the fight by accepting a campaign loss. And in a horror campaign, you can be as mean as you wish with campaign losses.

But it's not the numbers that make a monster worthy of a horror game. The numbers should fit the monster's role, but they're not that interesting. It's their abilities that make them memorable. The flexibility of 13th Age is a great asset here. If you have the opportunity, look up Fomori in the second Bestiary. One of them makes all staggered enemies feel like their eyes are being pulled out, and does pop them out if they die. Another rips off its target's skin on a critical hit. It's not their stats that make them scary.

Even the escalation die, the PCs' best friend, can be subverted. Normally, it creates the dynamic where PCs start on their back foot, then turns things around as the battle progresses. Very heroic of them. Horror, on the other hand, can also see the protagonists win, but only once they've suffered enough. Maybe in some fights, the escalation die can only be used if you do something unpleasant or unfortunate (see devils in 13 True Ways for an example), or maybe it only goes up if something horrible happens. For example, the escalation die only goes up if on the previous turn the cultist leader had sacrificed one of her captives. Once the sixth captive has been sacrificed, the demon lord is summoned and you're going to need that maxed out escalation die.

To summarize, this is the key to a heroic horror game: instead of asking how the characters win, it should ask what the characters lose in order to win. Innocent bystanders or the characters' innocence, friends lost to monstrous enemies or friends who now see you as a monster, there is always a cost. In a heroic horror game, the characters are still powerful; they have agency. For all the good it does them.



# LYCANTHROPY

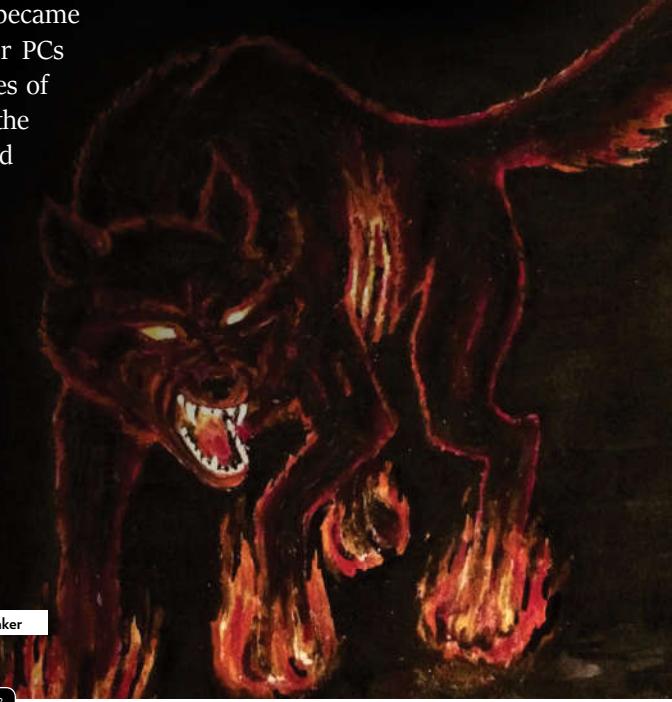
BY JOSÉ LUIZ F. "TZIMISCEDRACUL" CARDOSO

## RULES

### LYCANTHROPY AFFLICTED PLAYER CHARACTERS

The werebeasts stats and lore from 13 True Ways give the game master all the tools he needs to insert lycanthropy in his campaigns (with a twist or two, because we're, after all, talking about 13th Age). The Cursed Bite ability is the classic take on lycanthropy, where a wounded PC becomes a new and uncontrollable werebeast in the next full moon. The fact that the Cursed Bite is a special ability instead of a regular attack solves an old problem of d20 campaigns, where combat with lycanthropes could destabilize the entire party. 13 True Ways focuses on the drama, letting the game master choose which player has a chance of infection and thus allowing for a better adventure (although I see nothing wrong if the "Werewolf King" of your campaign can infect the entire party).

However, 13 True Ways does not exactly tell us what happens to an infected PC. At my table, when the party's wizard became infected, I decided to create a rule for PCs that are suffering from the initial states of lycanthropy. My design goal, following the 13th Age ethos, was that the rule should be simple, but fun. So, instead of just saying that the wizard morphed into a full werewolf on the spot with the next full moon, I created a table, based on the Wendigo's Hunger effect (from page 211 of the 13th Age Bestiary).



Art: Patricia Baker

### WARLOCK TALENTS

As a warlock, you receive three talent points at character creation. The bread and butter of a Warlock's talents are his pacts. However, he is not limited to having these at his disposal, expanding his talents beyond the traditional borrowed magic.

You are not limited to Pacts with your Patron alone, however at least one talent point must be spent in a Pact with your Patron. Each Pact represents a bargain with another entity for power. Feel free to flesh out the nature of this entity with your GM. Most pacts provide you with access to another class's spell list. You are free to take feats in any of the spells you have been given access to.

#### FEY PACT

You have bargained with an ancient creature of the Fey. This may be a powerful fairy, a truly ancient elf, or anything else in between. These creatures are a part of nature, forces of nature even. Their gift reflects that. Functionally this provides the same benefits as the Terrain Caster talent belonging to the Druid class. Spells known becomes daily spells that can be cast. Any spell that references Wisdom will use Charisma instead.

#### ELEMENTAL PACT

You have bargained with a primordial creature in pursuit of Elemental magic. This could be a grand genie, or even a raw elemental of unusual intelligence. Interestingly enough, demons and devils also often provide this kind of power. This talent uses spells from the Druid's



make a trade of this sort, once per full heal-up. The spells are cast using the new caster's attributes. Warlock spells will still use Charisma, even if they normally would use another attribute with the new caster. However, if the spell is one a Warlock would be able to replace the casting attribute with Charisma per talent, she does.

**Adventurer Feat:** All spells acquired by the Warlock in this manner use Charisma as their attribute.

**Champion Feat:** You may trade spells twice between full heal-ups.

**Epic Feat:** You may permanently trade spells with another player character. Recoveries may not be substituted. This cannot be reversed. This may only be done once.

In addition, you gain the following ability for use in combat. This is in addition to any spells granted by pacts.

## LET'S MAKE A DEAL

Warlock Spell

Close-quarters spell

Daily

**Target:** One nearby enemy

**Attack:** Wisdom + Level vs MD

**Hit:** One of two possible outcomes depending on the target.

If the target possess a spell or spell-like ability, the target loses this ability. The Warlock gains this ability for the duration of the encounter. The attack roll and damage do not change. If the target has multiple abilities that would qualify, they make a save. If they succeed, they pick the spell granted to the warlock. If they fail, the warlock has the choice. In exchange, the Warlock loses one Recovery, and grants the target temporary hit points, equal to what the recovery would have granted the caster. Bear in mind that if the loss a spell would break the encounter, the GM has final say in what is a valid ability for theft.

If the target has no valid ability deal  $3d6 + \text{Wisdom}$  psychic damage instead.

**Miss:** Half Damage

3rd level |  $6d6$  damage

7th level |  $10d8$  damage

5th level |  $9d6$  damage

9th level |  $2d8 \times 10$  damage.

**Champion Feat:** The Warlock always has their choice of spell.

**Epic Feat:** Let's Make a Deal is now an Encounter ability for you.

**Lycanthropy:** those affected by a Cursed Bite attack are susceptible to a series of special triggers and must save (usually at 16+) or roll on the table below (1d6) once per turn.

Common triggers are things like seeing the full moon, smelling raw meat or witnessing a bloodshed battle. It's safe to assume at least one trigger should happen per combat. Personally, I like to trigger an afflicted a PC at Escalation Die +3 or +4 (when the combat is well underway and there's probably a few corpses scattered around the battlefield).

### 1-2

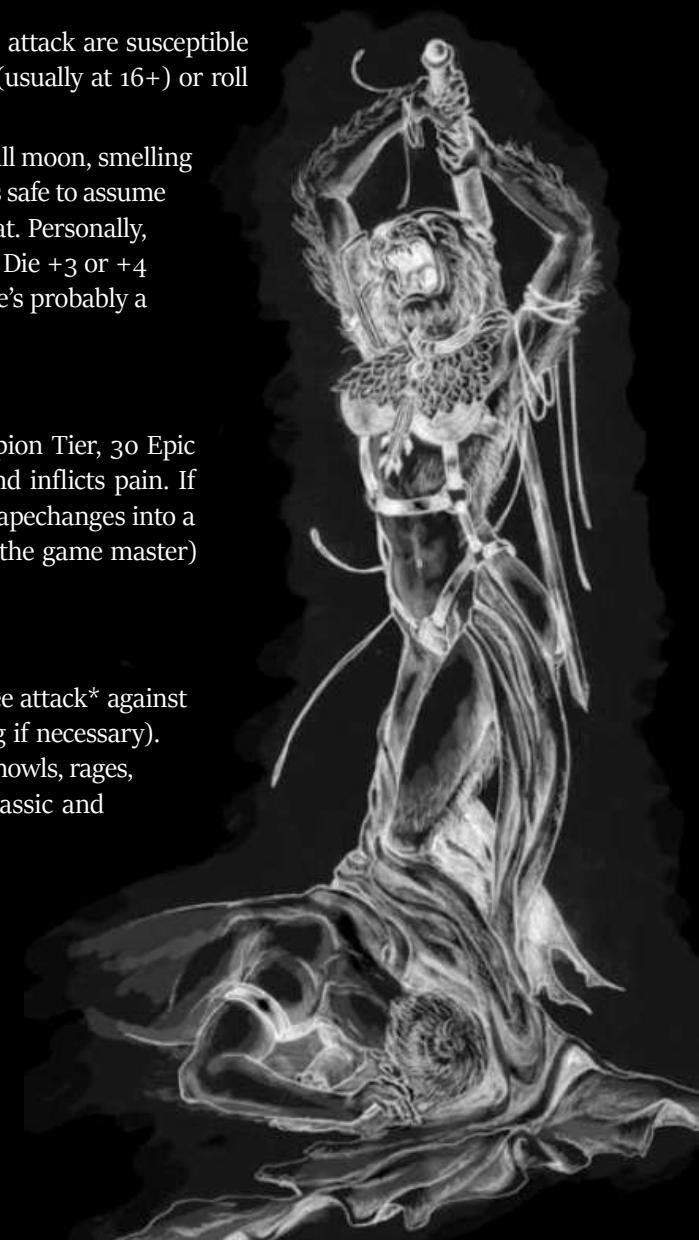
The afflicted PC takes 10 damage (20 Champion Tier, 30 Epic Tier) as the lycanthropy distorts his body and inflicts pain. If the afflicted PC falls below 0 hit points, he shapechanges into a werebeast with full hit points (controlled by the game master) and attacks everyone around.

### 3-4

The afflicted PC makes a basic unarmed melee attack\* against the nearest and most vulnerable ally (moving if necessary). If there are no targets nearby, the afflicted PC howls, rages, destroys something or executes a similar classic and cinematic lycanthropic action.

### 5-6

The afflicted PC makes a basic unarmed melee attack\* against another werebeast, animal, monster or equivalent savage creature in range, which he sees as a rival (the afflicted PC can choose the target). If there are no targets nearby, the afflicted PC howls, rages, destroy something or executes a similar classic and cinematic lycanthropic action. ☀



*\*If the game master is feeling generous (or devilish), these unarmed melee attacks inflict  $1d8$  or  $1d10$  per level (because of growing claws or fangs).*



# FACTIONS AND WHAT THEY MEAN TO ME IN A GAME OF 13<sup>TH</sup> AGE

BY ΠΕΦΤΗΛΙΕ ΝΕΛΣΟΝ ΡΑΜΟΣ

To me, a faction is a source of contiguous narrative whose course may be readily altered. Wow, ok, so what does that mean? Let me start by offering an example. In 1982, a really awesome movie was released – one that I wouldn’t have the privilege of watching until many years later. It was Mad Max 2: The Road Warrior. Now without getting into the movie or even the movie’s plot (that’s not the important part), the movie had a bunch of extras that had non-speaking roles. These extras were more than set dressing for a single scene – they were all pretty identifiable. This gave their eventual demise more heft, I think – more than a simple “red shirt” at least.

The point of the story is that while it may be fun to whoop nameless bad guy #3’s tail in combat, you’ve achieved nothing more than beating up a nameless bad guy. What happens after defeating 100 nameless bad guys? Even if the sea of nameless bad guys are tied to an icon, what does it mean? See what I’m getting at? Don’t get me wrong, having a sea of undead lead by three or four powerful necromancers that follow the Lich King is fun and easy, but it lacks something, don’t you think?

Imagine for a moment that four powerful necromancers were each the head of their own faction. Better yet, they are all a part of the same faction, but leaders of their own faction houses. Let’s name the faction “the bone grinders” and say that it’s the bone grinders’ job to acquire the corpses that will fuel their leaders’ necromantic armies. After that, you can add a little flavor to the divisions of bone grinders. The southern division of bone grinders are dragonkin and their necromancer rides atop a skeletal dragon. So the next time you defeat nameless bad guy #3, you defeated a southern bone grinder. After 100 nameless bad guys, you can say you destroyed the southern faction of bone grinders, maybe earning the ire of the other bone grinder factions. I’m starting to get excited just writing about all this!

Phew. Now, where was I? Ah, yes, factions! Instead of throwing nameless cannon fodder, i.e., “red shirts” at your players, you can throw something with a bit more heft, that is a bit more tangible and has some built-in narrative. You can give your players a more direct way to interact with the icons. Offering up the southern division of bone grinders

## MAGIC PROGRESSION

The spells available to a Warlock depend on their class talents. All Pact Talents can be taken at two levels, Initiate and Adept. Adepts require spending two of your three talent points. Adepts have access to far more spells per day with their pact, reflecting deeper ties to their patron.

You gain the following spells per day, depending on your Pact.

Initiate		Adept		
Warlock Level	Spells Known	Level the Spells are Cast At	Warlock Level	Spells Known
Level 1	1	1st Level	Level 1	2
Level 2	1	1st Level	Level 2	2
Level 3	1	3rd Level	Level 3	3
Level 4	2	3rd Level	Level 4	3
Level 5	2	5th Level	Level 5	4
Level 6	2	5th Level	Level 6	4
Level 7	3	7th Level	Level 7	5
Level 8	3	7th Level	Level 8	5
Level 9	3	9th Level	Level 9	6
Level 10	3	9th Level	Level 10	6

## MASTER OF BARGAINS

You’ve learned a thing or two about what it means to trade in power. You’ve gained the ability to trade power with your allies. You can gift an ally with the ability to cast one of your spells, similarly they can gift you with one of theirs. Though an exchange must always occur. You cannot receive a spell without sharing one, nor share one without receiving one. 2 recoveries can be substituted in lieu of a spell. This exchange takes time, and must be performed when you would have time for a quick rest. The original holder of the spell loses the ability to cast the spell until their next full heal-up. You can only



source of their power. All warlocks must take at least one Pact Talent associated with their Patron. Each spell talent corresponds with one Patron. The exact nature of this Patron needs to be established in conjunction with the GM, as not all such figures may be appropriate in all settings. These will be expanded upon in the talents section, however the following Patrons can exist: Fey, Elemental, Celestial, Old Magic, Eldritch, and Grave. Additionally, your Patron functions as an icon for your character alone, and you may spend Icon Relationship points towards them. At least one point must be spent in this fashion. Typically, this relationship is either Positive or Conflicted. At 5th level, at least two points must be tied to your Patron, and three points at 8th level.

### SPELLCASTING IMPLEMENTS

Warlocks are spoiled for choice in terms of spellcasting implements. They may wield any implement, shifting it towards their purpose. However, they tend to favor those that match the themes of their patron or personal style.

as a sacrifice to your players makes for a more impactful story and is a pill that's a lot easier to swallow than letting them destroy the icon that faction follows.

So in closing, factions are like named NPC's in that they exist to add narrative depth to a game and serve as a more tangible thematic tie between named NPC's. The best part of factions is that while they do add depth, they are completely sacrificial extensions of the icons! ⚡

## THE SHADOWS OF THE ABYSS

### ASSASSIN TROUPE

FACTION

#### Icon Associations:

Diabolist and the Prince of Shadows

#### Description:

**A** group of mad assassins that are most proficient at removing their targets. They hunt only the targets chosen by their Prefects. Blindly obeying orders, they believe that they are the agents of a righteous cause: to free people from the tyranny of order.

The method by which the Prefects choose their targets vary. Some kill for coin, while others choose targets of authority to sow discord and chaos in communities. Others, still, leave it up to the will of chaos, believing that by discerning some convoluted series of randomness, they are given the names of those that must die. For example, one Prefect reads the random artifacting of the thread count in a linen woven by a specific and magical loom to select the next victim. ⚡



Art: Nefthalie Nelson Ramos

# ESPECIALLY NASTY

BY MIKHAIL BOCHN-Osmolovskiy



Every adventurer knows what a Gelatinous Cube is. Some are even familiar with other Gelahedrons. It's an iconic monster, an iconic image: a translucent geometric figure, all but invisible if not for the remains of the previous adventurer floating in the middle. Every illustration's got one. But who was this unfortunate fool, and what are they up to now?

## Haunted Gelatinous Cube

There's a poltergeist haunting its gelatinous murderer. Perhaps by avenging it, you'd be able to grant it release. If together they don't kill you first. Combined, the cube and the poltergeist are a bit like an elder, more horrible brother to the slime-skull (*Bestiary 109*).

We start with the typical gelatinous cube (13A 241), and it will still provide the main threat. Due to its occupant, it gains *Resist necrotic 16+*, but is otherwise unchanged.

### POLTERGEIST

Trapped inside its mindless killer, unable to hurt it in any way, the poltergeist lashes out at anything living.

*Double-strength 5th level caster [UNDEAD]*

Initiative: immediately before the cube (see Trapped Inside, below)

**C:** **Telekinetic fling** +10 vs AC (1d3 nearby enemies) - 18 damage.

**Spontaneous levitation** - The cube flies to engage a nearby enemy and immediately makes a Shlup'n'schlorp attack (see *gelatinous cube 13A 241*) against it with a +4 bonus.

**Face-to-face** + 10 vs PD (one enemy engulfed by the cube) - 36 damage.

**Trapped Inside:** The poltergeist is its own creature, though it may not be readily apparent from the start of the battle. It is in an essentially symbiotic relationship with the gelatinous cube that contains it, no matter how much it hates the arrangement. The poltergeist acts immediately before the cube's turn. It cannot be targeted or even seen by

## WARLOCK ARMOR AND AC

Type	Base AC	Attack Penalty
None	10	-
Light	10	-
Heavy	12	-2*
Shield	+1	-2

## WARLOCK MELEE WEAPONS

Weapon	One-Handed	Two-Handed
Small	1d4	1d6
Light or Simple	1d6	1d8
Heavy or Martial	1d8 (-2 attack)*	1d10 (-2 attack)*

## WARLOCK RANGED WEAPONS

Weapon	Thrown	Crossbow	Bow
Small	1d4	1d4	
Light or Simple	1d6	1d6 (-2 attack)*	1d6 (-2 attack)*
Heavy or Martial	-	1d8 (-2 attack)*	1d8 (-2 attack)*

## BASIC ATTACKS

### Melee Attack

At-Will

Target: One enemy

Attack: Strength OR Dexterity + Level vs. AC

Hit: WEAPON + Strength OR Dexterity damage

Miss: None\*

### Ranged Attack

At-Will

Target: One enemy

Attack: Dexterity + Level vs. AC

Hit: WEAPON + Dexterity damage

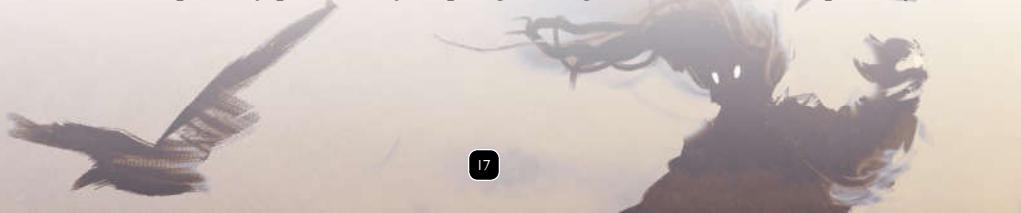
Miss: None

## CLASS FEATURES

All warlocks share the following class features.

### PATRON

Warlocks will make many bargains for power throughout their lifetime. However, all Warlocks have one primary patron they've pledged allegiance to. This is the primary



## WARLOCK STATS

Initiative, AC, PD, MD, Hit Points, Recovery Dice, Feats, Icon Points, and some Talents are level dependent.

Ability Bonus	+2 Charisma or Wisdom (different from racial bonus)
Initiative	Dex mod + Level
Armor Class (light armor)	10 + middle mod of Con/Dex/Wis + Level
Physical Defense	11 + middle mod of Str/Con/Dex + Level
Mental Defense	11 + middle mod of Str/Con/Dex + Level
Hit Points	(6* + Con mod) x Level modifier (see progression chart)
Recoveries	(probably) 8
Recovery Dice	(1d6* x Level) + Con Mod
Backgrounds	8 points, max 5 in any one background
Icon Relationships	3 (4 at 5th level; 5 at 8th level)
Talents	3
Feats	1 per Level

## GEAR

At 1st level, warlocks begin play with a melee weapon, light armor, and another bit of equipment related to their background.

If you begin play with your finances in perfect order, start with 25 gp. If you've been careless with your bargains, start with 1d6 x 10 gp.

## ARMOR

Warlocks typically favor light armor. The material tends to matter little, though often inspiration is taken from their patrons.

creatures not engulfed by the cube. To those outside, this is just a very angry gelatinous cube that spits boulders at them and occasionally flies. Those stuck inside come face to face with an angry ghost that tries to claw their face off as it dissolves. To add injury to injury, those engulfed by the cube are vulnerable to the poltergeist's attacks.

**Haunting:** The poltergeist cannot be killed by regular means. If it is reduced to 0 hit points, it reforms with full hit points inside the cube at the end of the cube's turn. The only way to get rid of it is to slay its murderer, the cube itself.

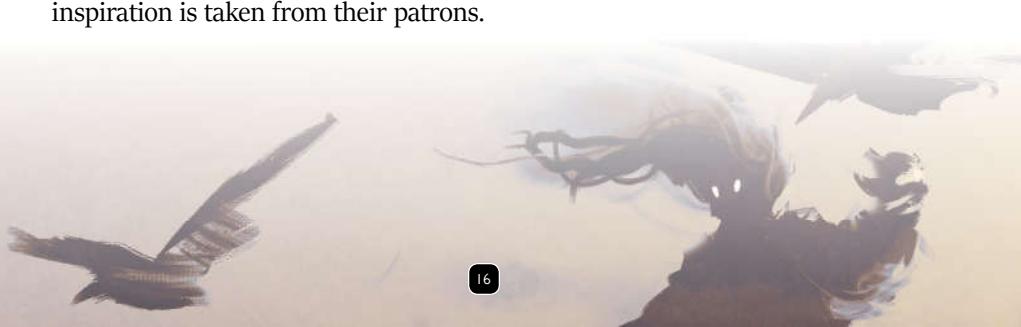
### Nastier Specials

"Wait, isn't this already nasty?" Oh, you have no idea. This isn't a haunted gelatinous cube after all. It's a *possessed* gelatinous cube. One way or another (a very unwise wizard did it?), the cube ate a cursed item, a gem or possibly a jar. This item sucks the soul out of whoever touches it, replacing it with the soul already trapped inside.

*Soul swap:* Whenever a creature engulfed by the cube falls unconscious, it pops free and heals using a recovery. Unfortunately, its soul is now trapped inside the cube, while the angry ghost controls its body. Mechanically, this means the creature is confused. As for the player who used to control the possessed character, they gain control of the cube. They probably want to swap back, before the cube is destroyed and the gem breaks. Good luck communicating this to the rest of the party through interpretative jiggling.

It is possible a soul switcheroo will occur if multiple people are engulfed by the cube at once, with PCs' souls ending up in wrong bodies during the fight. Perhaps the GM will rule such characters are not confused but merely hampered by their new bodies. Swap the character sheets and keep going! Fixing the issue after the fight is over is left as an exercise for the reader. ☠

**AC 20   PD 15   MD 20   HP 18**



# THE WARLOCK

BY MICHAEL PRUITT



*Dabblers and bargainers, these wielders of magic learn their sorceries not from study but by negotiation with greater powers.*

**PLAY STYLE** | Warlocks are masters of bargains as much as they are magic. They acquire their retinue of spells and abilities not through study or discipline, but through dangerous bargains with the great powers of creation. Often they find themselves on the short end in these arrangements, but the greatest of warlocks have been known to completely turn the tables on their patrons.

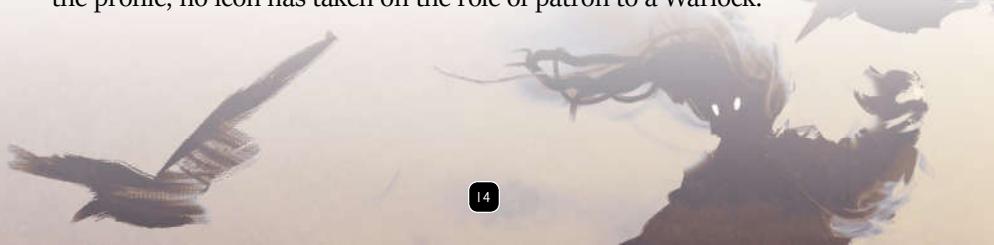
A warlock is not the best character for a player that wants to be a master of their own magic, but ideal for one that wishes to dabble across a variety of magical talents. Bear in mind that the Warlock references other classes for its abilities, both from the *13th Age Core Rulebook*, as well as *13 True Ways*.

**ABILITY SCORES** | Charisma is important for spellcasting as a Warlock, however Wisdom is also a vital trait for one engaging in such negotiations. You gain a +2 bonus to one of these as long as it doesn't overlap with your racial bonus.

**RACES** | All races may embark on the path of the warlock, but this path is typically preferred by the most legalistic of races. Typically, humans are the most common warlocks, but dwarves are oddly not all that rare.

**BACKGROUNDS** | The circumstances that bring one into the bargains for power of a Warlock are not unique to any social bracket, nor region. However, civilization does not look upon those that are willing to take such risks with their lives, let alone souls kindly. Typically, the pursuit of power will have taken one away from larger cities and into the wilds.

**ICONS** | Most of the icons frown upon the sort of bargains a Warlock is prepared to make. The Diabolist and Crusader are exceptions, as they understand the need to do what is necessary for power. The Emperor and Lich King have been known to employ Warlocks in their service, but often quite cautiously. The remaining icons tend to look upon them with extreme suspicion. Interestingly enough, even though they might fit the profile, no icon has taken on the role of patron to a Warlock.



## WARLOCK LEVEL PROGRESSION

Unlike other spellcasters, spell progression entirely depends on the Warlock's pacts. Not listed is the Warlock talent points. They receive three talents at creation, and do not gain more talents at higher levels.

Warlock Level	Total Hit Points	Total Feats	Level-up Ability Bonuses	Damage Bonus From Ability Score
Level 1	$(6^* + \text{CON mod}) \times 3$	1 adventurer		ability modifier
Level 2	$(6^* + \text{CON mod}) \times 4$	2 adventurer		ability modifier
Level 3	$(6^* + \text{CON mod}) \times 5$	3 adventurer		ability modifier
Level 4	$(6^* + \text{CON mod}) \times 6$	4 adventurer	+1 to 3 abilities	ability modifier
Level 5	$(6^* + \text{CON mod}) \times 8$	4 adventurer 1 champion		2 x ability modifier
Level 6	$(6^* + \text{CON mod}) \times 10$	4 adventurer 2 champion		2 x ability modifier
Level 7	$(6^* + \text{CON mod}) \times 12$	4 adventurer 3 champion	+1 to 3 abilities	2 x ability modifier
Level 8	$(6^* + \text{CON mod}) \times 16$	4 adventurer 3 champion 1 epic		3 x ability modifier
Level 9	$(6^* + \text{CON mod}) \times 20$	4 adventurer 3 champion 2 epic		3 x ability modifier
Level 10	$(6^* + \text{CON mod}) \times 24$	4 adventurer 3 champion 3 epic	+1 to 3 abilities	3 x ability modifier

