



THE MANOR WITHIN THE DUNES

By Savage Hess

Special thanks to Honeyshark and Jimmy

Content Warning:

Below are scenes of sex, gore, and torture. Archivists are recommended to discuss boundaries and expectations with their investigators before the investigation begins. Modify this module to your party's preference.

Section 1 - Logistics

This is a short module designed for low level investigators to be completed in one session.

Included are several items, a creature, a spell, and a dimensional mystery set in the dusty dunes of the desert.

Running the Investigation:

To run this investigation, you will need access to the *Acheron* core rule book. Before you sit down for this story, you should read through the entirety of this module, perhaps making notes on complicated parts or important clues and character traits.

Text appearing in boxes like this are meant to be read or paraphrased to the party.

District Debrief:

This investigation is set in District 45. It's a harsh desert that only the toughest survive. Deep into this wasteland is the small salt mining town of Veshnar.

The Hidden Truth:

During the breach, a wealthy family made a deal with a Meschakanis, a fey tricker. The Mother sacrificed their Son so that they may be able to keep living their lives of luxury. It's here that the family remains, perpetually indulging in vices.

The son isn't gone though, instead he's trapped in the cellar where the Fae feasts on his soul for eternity. Every now and then his spirit slips away and calls out for others to end his curse.

The priest's son, Philip, is one of the poor souls that was recently tricked into helping. He too has become trapped in the cursed manor.

Character Investment:

The Historian Society has asked the investigators to find Akish Freeman, an accomplished archeologist. Her last letter was mailed from the small town of Veshnar

Part 2 - Veshnar

As you step out of your caravan, sore from the long journey, you find a town of concrete blocks with steal doors and no windows in the middle of a vast desert. To the east, you see a white mound with miners coming in and out. The town is covered in the smell of salt.

Veshnar is small mining town located deep into District 45 and is mostly populated with Demonic Darkleechers

Its only stable source of income is the salt from a nearby quarry. The only notable places within the town is the Salt mine and a church dedicated to Nyx, the Goddess of Chaos.

Because of the recurring sandstorms, the building of Veshnar are squat concrete blocks that have no windows. Inside, it's cold and smells like iron.

The Townsfolk are wary of most travelers and are often seen wearing a face covering with goggles. They can be coaxed into conversation if under the guise of trading goods.

Risk - Sandstorms:

Sandstorms are a common occurrence here. The sandy winds are harsh and potentially lethal. Anyone caught in one is Blinded and must make an DC 10 Endurance check. Those that fail receive 1d4 slicing damage.

If the Archivist needs to nudge the investigators along or trap them somewhere, summoning a sandstorm would work well.

Local Intel:

If Investigators manage to pry out some information from the locals, they may find out one of the following.

-People, usually travelers, go missing every now and then.

-Some people have seen a pale glowing figure without a head standing in the distance. They can be heard saying "Help..."

-Not too far off Is an old, abandoned manor that's been here longer than the town itself.

-Iron can protect you from trickster spirits.

-A Historian just passed through here, asking about artifacts and old texts.

-The local priest has recently lost his son.

The Salt Mine:

Just a little east of the town is the salt mine.

The Mine entrance is littered with rusted mining equipment such as iron pickaxes, chains, and the occasional explosive.

Rails head down into the mine where concrete blocks support the walls and roof. The smell and taste of salt in the air overpowers the senses.

Dynamite:

Investigators who want to dabble in explosives will have to buy them or succeed a DC 14 Sleight of Hand to steal them. (See Appendix A)

The Church:

The church is a tall concrete block without windows and a steel door. Flicker of lights leak out from the entrance. This is the chapel of Nyx and is being cared for by Bron Caster

Inside are rows of steeples and a stage. Oil lanterns dot along the side with a brazier at the center. Religious depictions of a Goddess cover the walls. Every step you make echoes within.

Bron Caster:

A Warborne that became a priest for the Church of the Twin Gods. He's a man built like an ox with a body covered in scars. He can come off as stern with a harsh voice, but he truly has a gentle heart. During a rite of passage, he came to Veshnar. He's since decided to tend to the flock here and only worships Nyx, the Goddess of Chaos.

His son, Philip Caster, has recently disappeared and he fears that this is punishment by the God Darium. He refuses to leave the town but is willing to inform the players that the desert is home to an evil presence and that it'd be best that they carried iron with them.

Buying Equipment:

While the locals distrust strangers, they're more than happy to barter. They prefer to trade for food and water but are willing to accept cash. (For prices, see Appendix A.)

Alternatively, investigators can try their hand at stealing from the town's folk. They're normally on edge so it'll be a base DC 12 Sleight of Hand check with increasing difficulty for more precious items.

PART 3 - The Manor

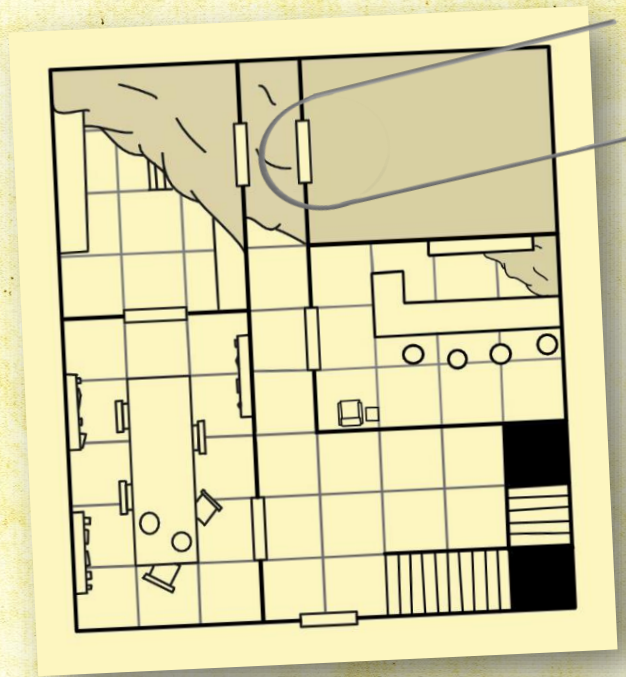
After a long trek into the desert, you finally arrive at a large estate that is partly covered in sand. Its surfaces have been bleached by the sun and its windows have been cracked with time. A simple archeology camp is buried under the sand.

Risk - The Pocket Dimension:

This decrepit home is more than it seems. As your investigators spend time within it, they may be pulled into the other side of the manor. At the archivist's discretion, have a players make a wisdom saving throw equal to the room's DC. This document will refer to such checks as *Reality Saves*. those that fail are pulled into the pocket dimension.

It is recommended to make these checks as the investigators progress through the manor. It has been found be successful to pull one investigator at a time but don't shy away from pulling multiple at once.

If investigators happen to kill those trapped inside, they flicker back to life in an entranced state but are inevitably dead if the pocket dimension collapses. The only way to escape is to break the pact with the Meschakanis or to kill it.



1 - The Foyer

Inside is a decrepit foyer with a rickety staircase to the right. Forward is a hallway with two doors and ends with a cascade of sand. The only notable feature within this room is a torn family photo, cast aside to the ground. You also feel a fluidity to the air, as if it were made of slick gel.

Have the team roll a Listen Check. The highest roller hears the faint sounds of people laughing from the dining room. The Foyer has a *Reality Save* DC of 7.

Portrait:

A careful hand with a DC 12 Craft or Sleight of Hand check can recreate the image of the family. A DC 10 spot check lets the viewer notice the father is wearing a strange amulet.

Pocket Dimension:

The foyer is in perfect condition. The walls are covered in timeless photographs with a family portrait taking center stage.

Before these pictures is a spirit leecher with a heavy backpack stuffed with equipment. They're quietly mummering to themselves as they study the pictures.

Portrait:

The portrait found on the other side is untarnished and shows several houseworkers behind the Mother and the Father. Where the Son should be, there is only a noticeable space.

Leaving:

Attempting to leave through the front door only result in walking into another room of the house.

Akish Freeman:

She is a Spirit Darkleecher from the Historian Society that specializes in the north eastern desert. Her skin is a pale green with pickles all over her skin. Her voice is course and she hardly ever needs to drink water. She carries a bulky backpack everywhere she goes.

She's recently heard of the Manor and has trekked through District 45 to find it only to find herself trapped on the other side.

She's reluctant to inform or rely on the investigators unless she believes that they are from the Historian Society.

2 - The Dining Room

A long dusty table stands with platters serving up sand. Some of the chairs are still titled outwards, inviting you to take a seat. The cabinets carry shattered pottery. The door leading to the kitchen is covered in scratch marks and a faint smell of rot lingers before vanishing.

The platters are partially made of iron and could be used against the fae spirit. The Dining room has a Reality Save DC of 10.

Pocket Dimension:

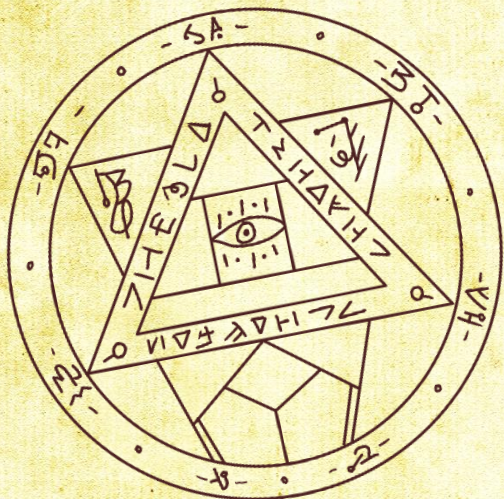
This room is pristine, and the table is filled. All sorts of people are eating all kinds of foods. Looking at the meals, some are strange machinations from bazaar lands while others are meals reminiscent of home.

If an investigator eats from the table, they will regain 1d4 sanity but lose 1d4 wisdom.

3 - The Kitchen

The back portion of the kitchen is covered in sand. What is still visible is a series of cupboards, a cooking stove, and a cellar door with a peculiar lock sits at the very center.

A DC 10 Investigation finds a rusted Iron pan in a pantry. See Appendix A. The Upstairs hallway has a Reality Save DC of 13.



Cellar Lock:

This lock has no holes for keys but rather an empty section that resembles a detailed amulet.

A DC 25 Athletics or Disable Device breaks open the lock.

Pocket Dimension:

The room is void of anything except a cellar door at the center of the room with an ornate lock and a boy in an entranced state trying to open it. The smell of blood emanates from below.

The boy is Philip Caster, the son of the Priest from Veshnar. He has succumbed to the lure of the house and is stuck in a trance, believing that he can help free the Son.

Philip Caster:

He's a scrawny half-fleecher with horns for eyes and shriveled skin. He feels like it's his duty to help others.

Investigators may find it hard to bring him back to his senses. He insists on only giving vague answers about "helping the Son".

4 - The Lounge

Around the room is a bar and deflated chairs. The shelves behind the bar have fallen apart, broken bottles litter the floor. The smell of liquor barely lingers in the air.

Any booze remaining have long since evaporated. The Lounge has a Reality Save DC of 10.

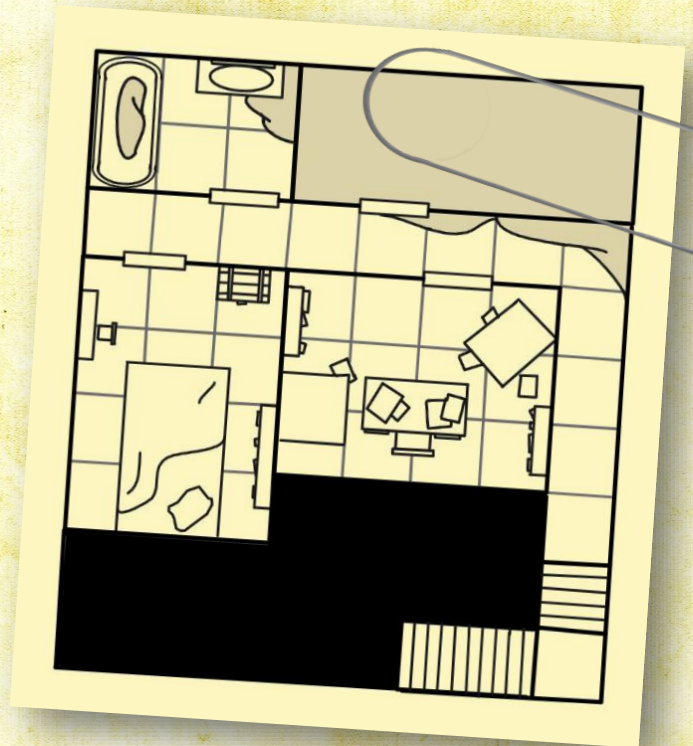
Pocket Dimension:

The shelves are back in place and lined with the most exquisite of liquor, some brands you have never heard of while others are dangerously close to home. Several people are in here drinking, particularly a woman in scarlet dress with unusual aura around her.

This woman is the Mother. She has a semblance of self-awareness but prefers to care for her drink rather than doing anything else.

The Mother:

She's open to conversation but will interrupt frequently to get another drink. She's particularly hesitant to provide details on the deal.



5 - Upstairs

The hallway upstairs is dark from sand covering the windows. Every step an investigator makes creaks with the floorboards. There are 4 sets of doors.

The one leading to the spare bedroom refuses to budge. If investigators manage to open the door, they'll find a room filled with sand. The Upstairs hallway has a Reality Save DC of 10.

Pocket Dimension:

The windows are clear of any debris and outside are grassy plains. Looking out there, is almost like looking at shifting yet pristine painting.

The door to the second bedroom is gone.

6 - The Bathroom

The mirror is shattered, and the tub is full of sand. The air in here is still.

Perceptive or curious investigators may notice a bit of bone sticking out of the sand in the tub. The Bathroom has a Reality Save DC of 13.

Pocket Dimension:

The tub is full of now full of water and sloshing a spray of sea foam. A low purple light is emanating from within the water.

The water in the tub bottomless. If investigators look below, they can see a skull with intricate carvings.

This is a Skull of Remembering (See Appendix B). This artifact contains the Fae ritual Oath Breaker. (See Appendix C)

Skull:

With a DC 14 Knowledge (Fae or Demon) Check, the investigator can learn what the skull is and that it contains an Oath Breaker ritual. Alternatively, Akish can identify it.

7 - The Study

Toppled bookcases lay scattered around the room with piles of brittle books to accompany them. In the center is a desk covered in papers. Every step is accompanied with a crumpling of paper like leaves.

A DC 10 Investigation check finds an odd amulet within the desk. Any attempt to pick up a book requires a DC 10 Sleight of Hand or Knowledge (Archeology). The Study has a Reality Save DC of 13.

Pocket Dimension:

The Study stretches beyond sight. Hunched over the desk is a man in a fine tailored suit.

This man is the Father. He is willing to talk to the investigators but believes that the answer to escaping is within this library.

The Father:

He's perpetually looking for a way to save the Family from the Fae and the Breach. Hung around his neck is a strange amulet, the key to the cellar.

With a DC 12 Social check, he will be willing to part ways with the amulet.

He has not faith in others but may tell the team about the protective powers of Iron and that there's an artifact in the house that might be able to banish the creature.

8 - The Remaining Bedroom

A beaten-up mattress rests against the back of the room with all of its linen crumbled to dust. The dresser has its drawers pulled open with sun bleached clothes strewn about.

A DC 10 Investigation check finds a rusted Iron knife, caked in crusted blood, under the bed. This Bedroom has a Reality Save DC of 10.

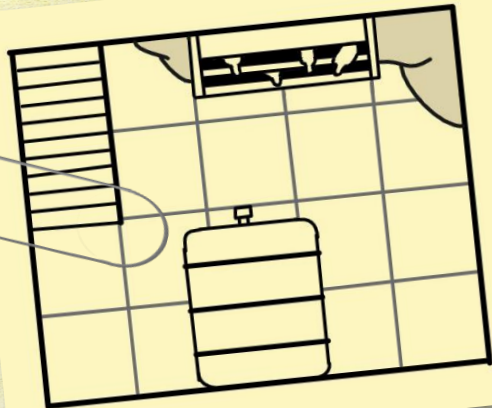
Pocket Dimension:

The smell of sex lingers in the air and an orgy of bodies sprawls the length of the room, utilizing every conceivable surface.

The rusted Iron Knife can be found under the bed still.

For squeamish parties, it's recommended to change the scenario to an orgy of violence that never leaves physical scars.





9 - The Cellar

In the darkness, there are rows of wine bottles and a large barrel. A trail of dried blood leads to a mutilated and mummified body. Its head is missing.

This body belongs to the Son. If investigators have managed to make it this far without slipping into the other realm, have all remaining persons role a DC 16 Reality Save.

The Son:

Closer inspection reveals that he's still alive and barely breathing. He can be heard whispering for his mother and death. It seems as if his intestines have been pulled apart and chewed on.

Anyone witnessing such a graphic scene must make a Violence or Morality Sanity save. Those that fail will lose 1d6 sanity.

Meschakanis:

This is the heart of its lair and the source of the curse. The Fae creature likes to linger here, lapping up the sorrow of the Son.

If faced with certain death, the creature will try to flee. (See Appendix D)

Pocket Dimension:

A grotesque amalgamation of predators sewn into the shape of coyote is feasting on the entrails of a still alive man whose head is missing. The creature stops and turns to look at you. Its face is human.

In here, the Investigators can see the true form of the Meschakanis. Any who witness this must make a hard Sanity save. Those that fail take 1d6 sanity.

The creature will try to barter with the investigators but is willing to resort to violence.

Section 4 - Ending

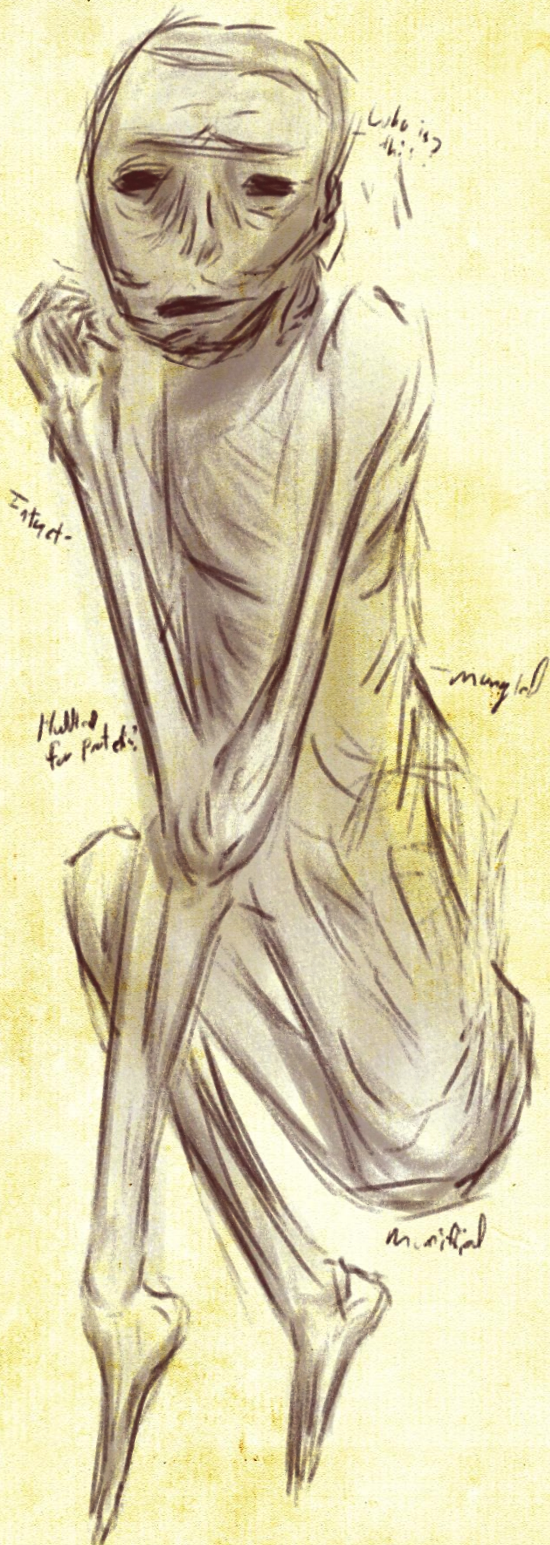
If Philip and/or Akish survives, give the investigator one CP per saved character. If the Investigators bind or banish the Meschakanis, then give them one CP. If they manage to outright kill the creature, give them another CP.

Further Results:

If the investigators remove the Fae creature, the house will begin to crumble away. All the inhabitants will reappear as shriveled mummies; except Philip, Akish, and the Investigators. That is, if they haven't died while within the pocket dimension.

If Philip lives, then Bron will shower the investigators with gratitude and give them an amulet of Nyx.

If Akish survives then she will bring her discoveries back to the Historian's Society. They may be inclined to fund further investigations into the deserts of District 45.



Appendix A - Equipment

Bag of Salt - \$0.25

Goggles - L, Prevent blindness in sandstorms, \$5.00

Steel 9mm Ammo - \$2.00 for 10 bullets

Iron Chain - One Handed, 1d4 B, Overt/Heavy, 5lbs, \$4.00

Iron Pan - One Handed, 1d4 B, Overt, 11b, \$4.50

Iron Pickaxe - Two Handed 1d8 P, Overt/Heavy, 8lbs, \$12.00

Dynamite - Explosive, 3d6 B, 0.5lbs, \$6.00. DC 14
Demolition to arm, DC 12 Dex
Save to take only half damage

Appendix B - Artifacts

Skull of Remembering:

This skull is the product of a ritual where a young person is has Dragon's Tongue carved onto the skull while the sacrifice is still alive. The soul is then used to bind memories to it.

By reading the carvings, the memories can be seen by reader.

Rituals can also be stored inside it, allowing the uneducated to cast them. The victim must know the ritual for it to be stored. The skull is destroyed in the process.

Appendix C - Rituals

Oath Breaker

Fae Ritual - Tier 3

Materials: V, C - Salt, Candles, and Bones

Cost: 3 Stacks of Unlucky

Casting Time: 30 minutes

Range: 30ft

Duration: Instantaneous

Saving Throw: Charisma

Risk: 25

System: Lay out the candles and create a circle of salt around the creature being banished. As you chant the spell, carve the name of the kind of creature unto the bone and crushing it. The creature is then transported into the beyond.



Appendix D - Bestiary

Meschakanis

Description:

This Fae creature prefers to take the form of a coyote. It reaches out to the desperate and makes a promise to give them eternal pleasure for one sacrifice. Those that are foolish enough to accept are trapped in a pocket dimension that the Fae controls. It can travel freely between this lair and reality. While inside, the tricksters true form is revealed. It appears as a distorted beast with a human face.

Motive:

The Meschakanis seeks to protect its lair and to find new prey. It prefers to trick and delude those trapped within by providing never ending pleasures.

Environment:

The Meschakanis can be found anywhere there is suffering to be escaped. It creates an illusionary pocket dimension that is a distorted version of wherever it established its lair.

Meschakanis

/Mes-cha-con-es/

Medium Fae, Aggressive Cheat, Rare

HP-40 EVA-14 SAN-60

STR-10 DEX-16 CON-8

0 +3 -1

INT-18 WIS-14 CHA-22

+4 +2 +6

Resistance - DR 1 S/P/B

Vulnerabilities - Iron

Skills - Deception +8

Languages - Standard

Movement - 40ft

Abilities:

Howl (Reaction) - If the Meschakanis takes damage that lowers its health below 30, 20, or 10; it will make a chilling howl. Those within 30ft must make a Wisdom Save(DC 12). Those that fail must take 1 stack of Frenzy.

Attacks:

Bite - 1d6+3 P, AP 1

