



1SHOTADVENTURES

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OPERA
UNCEASING

OVERTURE

ABOUT THE ADVENTURE

An Opera Unceasing is a 19th century gaslight horror adventure for *GURPS*, although it can easily be adapted to other game systems. A *Call of Cthulhu* version is also available at 1shotadventures.com.

In November 1879, the Paris Opera premiered *La Demoiselle aux Lanternes*, an unusual opera about a heroine who is always seen carrying a magic lantern that she claims guides her, though no one else can see its light. However, no one from the performance returned to their homes afterwards. It seems that the entire audience, including several influential citizens, just vanished in the middle of the performance. The authorities are baffled, and call in experts to investigate the mysterious event.

An Opera Unceasing is suitable for three-to-five "ordinary" 100-point characters. The end of this adventure includes six pregenerated characters so groups can get started right away, but players can also create their own scholars, detectives, anti-quarians, physicians, occultists, or other suitable figures.

Characters introduced for the first time in the adventure are noted in ALL-CAPS. Sections marked with a person  are opportunities for specific PCs, notably the pregenerated characters from the end of this adventure.

THE BACKSTORY

La Demoiselle aux Lanternes was a brand new opera that starred Corinne d'Orsay, a talented and up-and-coming ingénue. However, hours before the opera's premiere, the critical prop from the show – the heroine's lantern – vanished.

Desperate for a new lantern, the opera house's director sent his propmaster to scour Paris for a new one. One was found, an antique lantern of strange design, the "Threnolume Lantern". Little did anyone know, however, that this strange new lantern was a horrific artifact from eons past. It had the terrible capability to send men to the Howling Vortex, a universe where all things, if they endure long enough, become only screams and raw sound.

The swap of lanterns was intentional, set up by a wealthy textile magnate, the untalented and music-obsessed Maurice

Beaumont. He discovered the lantern and its occult secrets and plotted to have the opera's performers swept up into the Vortex. Then, he planned to channel the Vortex with a modified phonograph, and spend hours listening again and again to this opera of the damned.

Beaumont, however, was too cowardly to use the lantern himself. So he hired a patsy, Armand Albret, the lazy and unemployed twin brother of the lead soprano's jealous boyfriend. During the opera's third act, just when its complex notes triggered the lantern's light, the performers and audience vanished. Armand took the lantern from the stage and swept up the remaining crew so as to leave no witnesses.

The next morning, as the city of Paris realized that nobody returned from *La Demoiselle aux Lanternes*' inaugural performance, the authorities began their investigation. Utterly baffled by the case, the police called in the best investigative minds from Paris to assist in the matter...



ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

An Opera Unceasing spans three parts. In part one, the PCs are contacted by the Inspector Morel of the Paris authorities. They have no leads in the disappearance of hundreds of people at the opera the night before. The inspector asks the expert PCs to investigate the Opera House to discover what might have happened. They will discover that opera's lantern was replaced with a bizarre one at the last minute, and that Corinne had both a jealous boyfriend, Etienne Albret and wealthy admirer, Maurice Beaumont.

In part two, the PCs follow these leads across Paris. This is an open-ended investigation. They will find the origin of the lantern at a local shop, find that Etienne had a twin brother, Armand, who was involved with the disappearance, and that Maurice Beaumont was involved, paying Armand to use the lantern, and disappearing the next day. The PCs find Mau-

rice's home is a scene of obsession and horror, with acoustic devices strewn everywhere and eels feeding on a corpse in his bathroom, which was used to collect eel oil for the infernal lantern.

In part three, the PCs track Maurice Beaumont to a secret gaming salon. He's gone mad from listening to the "music" from the Howling Vortex and plans on repeating his venture on upcoming performances around Europe. He's also attended to by a Denizen of S'glhuo, a terrible being of raw sound who gained entry to our universe through Beaumont's experimentation. To complete the investigation, the PCs must confront Beaumont and the denizen before they can hurl them into the Howling Vortex, dissolving them into pure screams for eternity.

THE THRENOLUME LANTERN

An Opera Unceasing centers around the infernal object known as the Threnolume Lantern. At first glance, the lantern appears to be of Persian origin, but any antiquarian making a suitable ARCHAEOLOGY or HISTORY-2 roll discovers that its patterns merely mimic Eastern design.

While its true origin is unknown, an OCCULTISM or HIDDEN LORE roll reveals disturbing similarities in its patterns to those found in the forbidden writings of the Mad Arab in the *Necronomicon*. A critical success recalls the lantern as a Threnolume Lantern belonging to the Demon-Sultan described in that cursed tome, an unspeakable being said to rule "a court of piping horrors."

Whatever its origin, the lantern possesses the dreadful power to cast mortals into the Howling Vortex in the Gulf of S'glhuo, a universe where the self is broken down into raw sound. Only those of exceptional mental fortitude have been known to escape from this place, but return warped in body and emptied of reason, their humanity flensed into fragments.

Fortunately, the Threnolume Lantern is not easily used. No ordinary lamp oil works in it. It will burn only when fed with oil rendered from the fatty tallow of eels that

have gorged themselves upon the flesh of a screaming man. When lit, the lantern emits a whining, pale glow that chills rather than warms. Then, when it has absorbed enough notes does its true power reveal itself. Its light blackens, and any soul in its light is painfully torn away into the Howling Vortex. This was the fate that befell the audience, performers, and crew during *La Demoiselle aux Lanternes*, who now remain imprisoned forever, doomed to sing the same passages again and again as madness slowly devours what remains of humanity.

In this adventure, the obsessed magnate Maurice Beaumont has not only acquired the lantern, but also an early, experimental Edison phonograph which he modified from dreams sent from denizens of S'glhuo, turning it into a device capable of reaching the Vortex and playing back its voices. Hour after hour, Beaumont listens to its echoes through its horn. With each turn, the madness of the Vortex creeps further into his thoughts.

When they encounter the lantern, the investigators may conclude that destroying it is the wisest course. This is a perilous mistake! Unless the lantern is drained of its oil first, it will explode into dissonance and draw every soul within five yards screaming into the Howling Vortex.

ACT ONE

The Opera House

THE INSPECTOR'S LETTER

The PCs are presumed to be detectives, specialists, or trusted associates of the Paris authorities. On a frigid Wednesday afternoon, each is interrupted around two o'clock by a bundled-up young messenger. He delivers a sealed letter from Lucien Morel, Inspecteur Principal of the Brigade de Sûreté – the effective head of the Paris police (see [Handout A](#)):

I must beg the favor of your presence on this Wednesday evening, at four o'clock, in the Rotonde du Glacier, adjoining the Grand Staircase of the Palais Garnier.

A matter of the utmost seriousness has arisen in connection with the performance of last night, one which concerns both the reputation of the Opéra and the safety of certain persons attached to it. I would prefer to speak with you privately, and I trust you will understand the necessity of discretion.

I shall be waiting near the marble balustrade.

*Respectfully,
Inspecteur Principal Lucien Morel
Brigade de Sûreté, Préfecture de Police*

Each of the PCs has helped the inspector sometime in the past, although an urgent letter like this is some surprise to all of them.

Buying a day-old newspaper or making a CURRENT EVENTS (POP CULTURE) roll recalls that the Opera House premiered a new performance the night before, *La Demoiselle aux Lanternes*. The opera's tragic story tells the story of a young Parisian seamstress who believes her small lantern can guide her to the one soul destined to love her. Yet when at last she finds him, the light burns out, revealing that he had passed her by long before. Strangely, there is no review of the performance in the morning's newspaper.

THE OPERA HOUSE

The Paris opera house, the Palais Garnier, rises like a palace of gold and marble, crowned with statues of muses and mythological figures gleaming over the boulevard.

If the PCs arrive early, they will find the Opera House, the Palais Garnier, closed and locked. There are several uniformed

police guards preventing anyone from entering. They'll only say that there is an active investigation underway, and they are under orders not to let *anyone* in. Even if the PCs show the guards their letter, the guards will tell them to promptly come back later. The PCs will, however, be able to find several discarded opera pamphlets near the steps that describe the cast in more detail (see [Handout B](#)).

At 4 p.m. sharp, the guards will allow the PCs to enter. Inside, the Opera House's grand staircase sweeps upward beneath a ceiling of frescoes and glittering chandeliers. Waiting for the PCs is the uniformed INSPECTOR LUCIEN MOREL. He has a neat moustache and is dressed in civilian clothes – a wool coat, high-collared shirt, and felt hat.

Inspector Morel

"My friends, I am obliged to you for receiving my letter, and for presenting yourselves here at my request.

"We have worked together on several occasions in the past, and each time your assistance has served my investigations – indeed, perhaps even my career. But tonight, we stand before a matter of true perplexity.

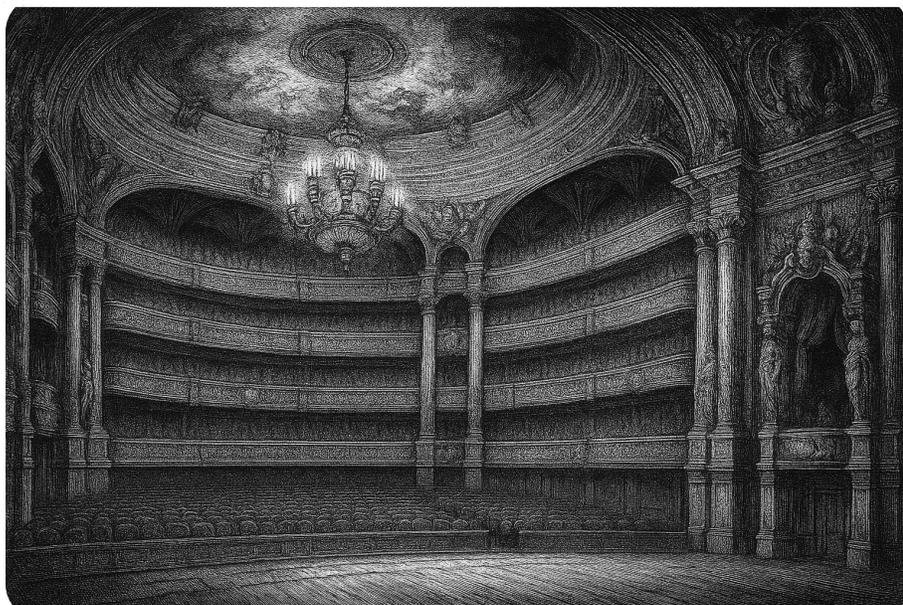
"Yesterday evening marked the premiere of a new opera, *La Demoiselle aux Lanternes*. Yet shortly after midnight, reports began to reach us that those who attended the performance had not returned to their homes.

"By morning, the complaints had come in such number that our office could scarcely record them all. It appears that no one, neither audience nor performers, left the Opéra as they ought.

"We have searched the building from the grand foyer to the deepest service corridors, and we have not found a single trace of where they have gone."

Inspector Morel offers to pay the investigators a small sum to help in the investigation. He admits he and his men have no theories as to what has happened, and the pressure on him will no doubt grow.

He mentions that several of the guests were wealthy, including most notably **Monsieur Maurice Beaumont**, a Parisian



THE AUDITORIUM & STAGE

The multi-level auditorium is where the audience sits for the opera. The walls are richly-decorated red and gold. Above the auditorium is its magnificent, heavy crystal chandelier.

Printed programs are scattered on the floor, discarded from the performance the night before. Jackets and opera glasses can be found under a few seats.

The stage is still set and decorated. An investigator who studies the libretto found in the director's office and compares it to the stage setup will learn that the stage is set for the third and final act of the opera. However, the final scene, or tableau, of the opera, where the chorus appears bearing many small lanterns, appears not to have been performed; a backstage shelf bearing the finale's lanterns are still carefully prepared for that moment.

textile magnate who paid for the most lavish box in the opera house – Box Five. He guesses that there may be additional, handsome rewards should the PCs solve this mystery for the wealthy families of the vanished.

The Opera House is vast, but Inspector Morel advises the PCs to begin with the Director's Office, which is located off a private corridor near the grand foyer.

THE DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

The opera director's office is a small, tidy room with dark wood paneling, heavy velvet drapes, and a wide desk positioned to face visitors. A few comfortable chairs face the desk.

The librettos, or scripts, of several operas are on the desk, including *Roméo et Juliette*, *Faust*, and the new *La Demoiselle aux Lanternes*, which is the only one with director's notes scribbled on the inside. Slipped into its pages, however, is a note the police missed – a worn, **opened envelope with a letter** written from the director to the prop master (**Handout C**):

Monsieur Lefèvre,

The soprano's lantern has vanished, and this lapse is utterly inexcusable. You will replace it at once—there is a reasonable sum enclosed for the purchase. Try Delaroche on the Rue Saint-Honoré if the original is not recovered by noon. I expect this matter corrected immediately, with no further embarrassment to the house.

—A. V.

The envelope contains no cash, just the letter. An **AREA KNOWLEDGE (PARIS)**-1 roll recalls that Delaroche is an upscale glass dealer located about a mile from the opera house. Otherwise, the PCs can find its location by inquiring with locals.

BOX FIVE

Several luxury boxes overlook the stage, including Box Five, the one owned by Monsieur Maurice Beaumont, the wealthy textile magnate.

Upon entering, the PCs notice a chill draft sporadically blows through the box, though it's origin is impossible to discern. With the draft, a **PERCEPTION (HEARING)**-2 roll hears the faint sound of a high-pitched, out of tune violin coming vaguely from the rafters.

A search of the box reveals a few clues. On a small side table is a **half-finished flute of champagne**. Near it is a program; inside is a calling card for Beaumont's valet, Hans Egger (**Handout F**) marking the second act. Under the program is a **small amount of cash**, which a **SAVOIR-FAIRE** roll reveals is meant to tip the server.

GM's Note: These items were left by Monsieur Beaumont as he left the show early. It is not critical that the players deduce this at this point.

A very careful search of the box (and making a **SEARCH** or **PERCEPTION**-5 roll) discovers a secret door behind a velvet curtain in the box, masterfully blended into the red and gold wall. It leads down a short, tight corridor, and then to a ladder that descends into the sub-basements of the opera house.

A VIOLINIST'S FALL!

About 20 minutes into the investigation, or at a particularly dramatic time, a loud crash followed by a startled cry is heard from the auditorium.

On the stage is a horrible sight – an emaciated, blue body writhes on the floor, its gray skin drawn tight like vellum over bones. Its hollow eyes flicker a pale light, and when it opens its mouth to speak to whoever it first sees, a vast and distant howl emerges instead. Then, it shudders, and dies. This calls for a FRIGHT CHECK-3!

Nearby, a stunned policeman says he walked into the auditorium and saw the body plunge from the rafters above. An investigation of the corpse can reveal:

- A PERCEPTION (SMELL) roll identifies the smell of a modest cologne coming from the corpse.
- A PHYSICIAN, DIAGNOSIS, or PHYSIOLOGY+2 roll confirms that the thing is human; it suffered trauma from the fall, which likely caused its demise.
- A careful examination or PERCEPTION (VISION)-2 roll finds that the corpse's left hand has callused fingertips. A MUSICAL INSTRUMENT or similar roll identifies this man as a violinist! The body also has a scar from a knife wound on his upper shoulder.
- The opera employed 20 violinists, so time and investigation is needed to identify the man as an iron-willed, bad-tempered second violinist named IVAN VOLKOV. Matching the cologne to a jacket in the orchestra's green room will find a calling card with his name on it. Otherwise, finding someone who had previously worked at the opera (or Aimée) may identify this talented Russian musician.

CORINNE'S PRIVATE DRESSING ROOM

The opera's lead soprano, Corinne d'Orsay, keeps a private dressing room just off the stage. It's a narrow chamber papered in faded rose wallpaper and dominated by a long gas-lit mirror. A worn fainting couch rests beneath a scatter of fresh flowers and the smell of perfume and powder permeates the room.

The flowers are all gifts that come from admirers and would-be suitors, although the biggest bouquet is from the director of the opera, wishing Corinne the best on her inaugural performance.

On the floor, underneath the singer's makeup table is a **crumpled and torn note** (see **Handout D**) from her boyfriend, Étienne Albret, which insists she quit the performance.

My Dearest Corinne,

I cannot endure the thought of tomorrow night, when you shall display yourself before that gaudy crowd who applaud only the curve of your smile and the shape of your form. You are not theirs to gaze upon. You are mine, and I implore you, no, I require you, to abandon this foolish debut. If your affections are as true as you have sworn, you will not step upon that stage and surrender yourself to that ravenous house.
—Étienne

Corinne's boyfriend, Étienne Albret, is a junior lawyer who works at Dupont, Vautrin & Cie, a modest law firm not too far from the opera. He met her in a cafe nearby. To discover the man's last name, the PCs will likely have to ask Aimée in the basement, Inspector Morel (who has done his research), or make a CURRENT AFFAIRS (POP CULTURE) roll.

There is also a smaller bouquet with a **calling card** (**Handout E**) from Maurice Beaumont, the owner of Box Five. On its back is a poem:

Corinne—

*Yours is the most angelic voice my ear has known
I wait to hear it sound again this night.
May this first hour not stand alone
But prove the prelude to delights yet to alight.*

GM's Note: Everyone will know that calling cards were often left when someone was requesting a visit or response.

A careful search of the room (and a SEARCH or PERCEPTION-5 roll) finds that the mirror can be unlatched from the wall, opening into a tight service corridor that runs through the opera, with ladders going up into the rafters and down into the sub-basements.

THE RAFTERS

The high rafters above the stage are a maze of wooden beams, ropes, and pulleys used to raise and lower scenery. It is dim and dusty here, and caution must be used.

After the violinist Ivan Volkov's body has fallen from here, any PC exploring the catwalks may glimpse a Denizen of S'ghlhuo (see p. 19). The reptilian creature – hailing from a universe composed entirely of sound – briefly peers through the veil between worlds, a consequence of Volkov's escape from the Howling Vortex in the Gulf of S'ghlhuo.

The creature flickers into view for only a few seconds before vanishing again. Any PC who makes a PERCEPTION (VISION) roll at -2 due to darkness sees it and must immediately make a FRIGHT CHECK-2. If a bad scare causes a PC to fall from the catwalks, the GM should allow a DX or ACROBATICS roll to grab nearby cabling before plunging 60 yards to the stage below, suffering 7d cr damage on impact.

THE SUB-BASEMENTS

Beneath the Palais Garnier lies a labyrinth of stone corridors, workshops, and hidden chambers. As the investigators pass costume vaults and carpentry rooms, they notice the air grows cold and damp. Eventually, they'll reach the great cistern, a lake of dark water, that serves as both a ballast and fire reservoir.

As the PCs explore the sub-basement, they'll hear the sound of frantic running footsteps coming from up ahead. Following the sound leads them to a costume vault. Hiding in the vault among the great robes of kings and queens is a young seamstress, AIMÉE CARON. At first, Aimée is terrified and barely able to speak, but with good roleplaying or influence rolls, will tell her story of how she came to be hiding in the basement:

If the floor is examined where Aimée says her friend was turned to ash, the PCs find little evidence of this. The floor is dusty and identical to the rest of the place.

Aimée Caron

"It was a dreadful night. Mme. Hélène tore her corset mid-performance, and I was sent below for another. But as I descended, all sound simply... ceased. No orchestra, no applause. It was as though I was the only person left on earth.

"My friend noticed this too and moved towards the hallway when a cold, colorless light fell upon him, and in an instant he fell to ash!

"I hid among these costumes, smothered in velvet and lace, scarcely daring to breathe. Then came heavy, deliberate footsteps, passing so near I felt the air shift, yet I saw no one. I've been hiding all night. I'm certain that something unspeakable now roams this basement!"

Aimée: ST 9, DX 12, IQ 9, HT 10. Appearance (Attractive); Shyness. Current Affairs-10; Sewing-12.

If comforted, Aimée has a few other pieces of information to divulge:

On her lost friend...

"His name was Julien... ten years my elder, but a strong stagehand. He was always trusted to reset the sets at the end of each performance."

On hiding from the police...

"I was seized with fright. I had never heard their voices before, and I could not bring myself to believe them when they declared they were officials."

On Corinne d'Orsay...

"Her talent was beyond compare... so lovely, so radiant, and a voice like the very song of an angel. Were I blessed with such a gift, I should not be mending seams."

On Corinne's boyfriend, Étienne Albret...

"A junior solicitor, I believe, from one of the firms near the Boulevard. He was polite enough, and loved Corinne's voice. But he hated the idea of her performing. I heard from a friend he was seen stealing the lantern the day of the performance."

If she is pressed, she'll recall that Étienne works at the law offices of Dupont, Vautrin & Cie. Note that her report is wrong; it was not Étienne who stole the lantern, but his twin, Armand.



On the missing lantern...

“The director was furious it went missing. The prop manager was baffled, for he always locked it up. Fortunately, Monsieur Lefèvre found another in time for the performance.”

On Monsieur Maurice Beaumont...

“The wealthy businessman who rents Box Five? He is a leering old man who always tries to impress the young performers. He never misses a performance.”

Aimée has no idea where the missing opera guests vanished to, but believes that they must have all been turned to ash by the heavy-footed man with the lantern.

On the strange reptilian creature...

“Heavens, I saw it as well! Though only in my sleep, while I dozed beneath the robes here. It was dreadful... eyes without pupils and squirming boneless fingers! In my nightmare, it showed me how to fashion a peculiar little music box.”

Note that if asked to describe the music box, she will say that it had strange patterns on it. Later on, the PCs will find that her description matches the patterns found on the Threnolome Lantern.

After some additional questions, the police will escort Aimée home.

CONCLUDING THE OPERA HOUSE INVESTIGATION

It will likely take several hours for the PCs to conclude their investigation of the opera house. In 1870s Paris, very few businesses are open late, so it is logical that the PCs will grab supper at a local restaurant and then return to their homes to sleep before continuing the investigation in the morning. Inspector Morel plans to continue to search the Opera House, and asks the PCs keep him informed with any discoveries that they may find.

However, during the night, PCs who have glimpsed one of a Denizen of S'glhuo will receive a nightmare (see insert) as it reaches out to them telepathically across universes.

NIGHTMARES FROM S'GLHUO

The PCs' investigation begins at 4 p.m. on a Wednesday. It is likely it will stretch on at least a day or two.

The PC with the lowest WILL who has also seen a Denizen of S'glhuo (likely in the rafters above the opera) will have a horrible nightmare that night. It is caused by the denizen reaching out telepathically to the investigator, in the hopes that they too will help build an acoustic machine capable of bringing them from their universe of raw sound into our physical one.

In the dream, the thin, reptilian figure guides them with boneless fingers in the assembly of a complex music box, crowned with a porcelain likeness of Corinne d'Orsay. The creature speaks throughout, though its voice is a droning pressure rather than sound. Only fragments of speech emerge – isolated words that strike with sudden clarity. Each word leaves the dreamer with a splitting headache behind the eyes, and the dreadful sense of having understood too much.

The dreamer effectively loses a night of good sleep, suffering 1 FP when they awaken, and another 1 FP every four hours after until they get a good night's sleep.

The next night the Denizen will come again, although sheer willpower can fend him off this time. Roll a Quick Contest of Wills (vs. the Denizen's Will 13). On a success, the PC escapes the dream and wakes up refreshed again. On a failure, however, the dream happens again, and the PC wakes up with 1 point in the ENGINEERING (ACOUSTIC APPARATUS) skill. The third night the same thing happens, but this time, PCs failing the contest wake with a dangerous Obsession to learn more about such contraptions.

ACT TWO

On the Trail of the Lantern

After exploring the opera house, the PCs likely know that a key prop from the opera, the lantern, was replaced at the last minute. They also have likely learned that the opera soprano, Corinne d'Orsay, had a very jealous boyfriend; they may also know that the rich occupant of Box Five, Maurice Beaumont left the show early.

In this next part of the adventure, the investigators will venture into Paris to follow the trail of clues to Maurice Beaumont's office, where he keeps the lantern. It's an open-ended segment -- players can venture across Paris following leads until they eventually track down the location of Maurice Beaumont, who is holed up in a secret gaming salon with both the lantern and the phonograph that lets him listen to the Vortex.

OFFICES OF DUPONT, VAUTRIN & CIE

The law offices of Dupont, Vautrin & Cie are not too far from the Palais Garnier. The offices occupy the second floor of a stone-facade Haussmann building, and are open from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays.

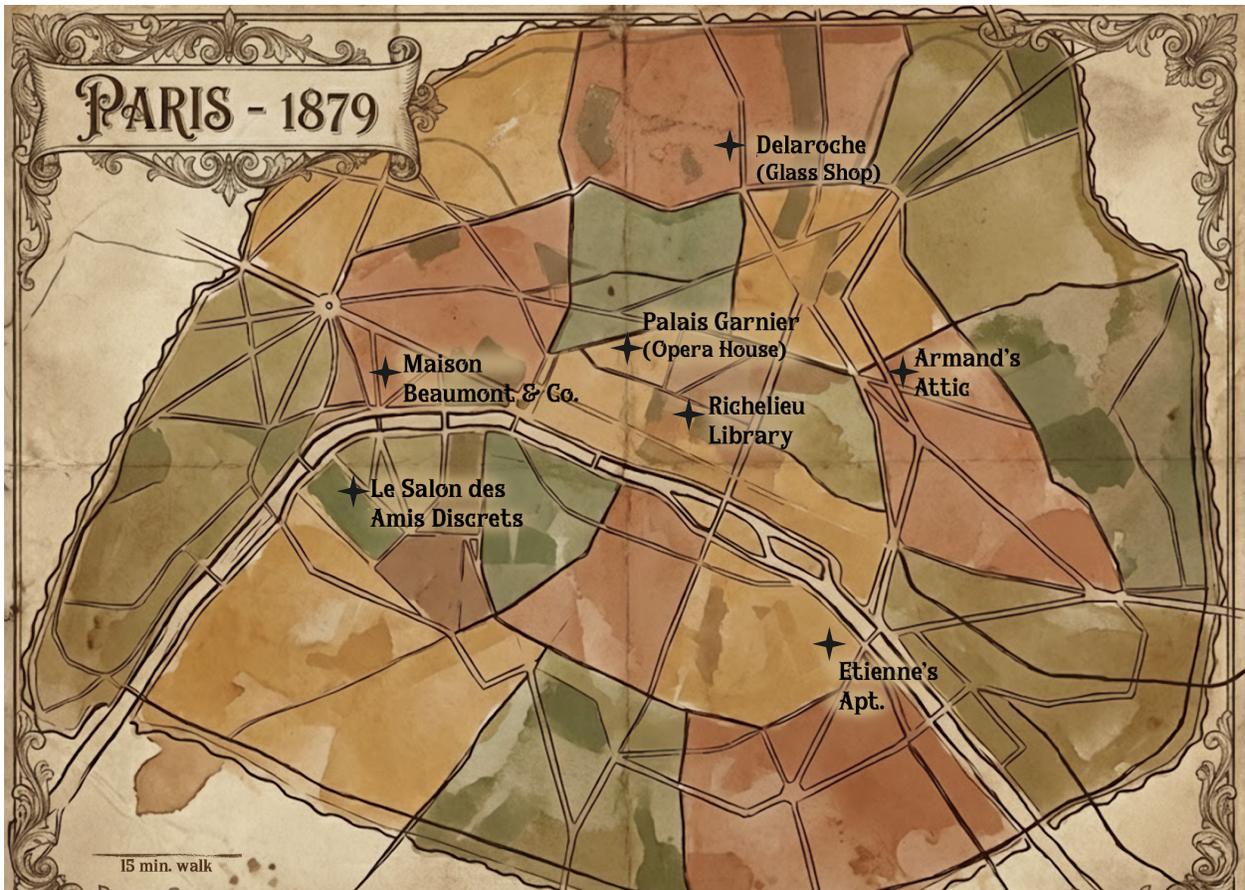
Inside, the office smells of ink and old paper, with orderly desks and neatly stacked case files. As the PCs enter, a well-dressed and friendly young clerk approaches them and inquires about their business.

The clerk has not yet heard of the disappearance at the opera, but he knows Étienne and Corinne. With friendly roleplaying, a ruse, or good social skill use, the PCs can get him to talk a bit about them:

On Étienne Albret...

"Étienne is one of the most diligent men we have. Unfortunately, illness has kept him from his duties these two days. The consequence has been a heavier burden borne by his colleagues, but we all wish him a swift recover."

To get Étienne Albret's home address from the clerk, the PCs will need a fair reason, along with a successful social skill roll such as FAST-TALK, DIPLOMACY, or ACTING.



On Étienne's girlfriend, Corinne d'Orsay...

"She's only come by our offices once before, but I could tell she was a kind and well-mannered young lady. Unfortunately, I haven't found the time to see her sing yet."

On Étienne's brother, Armand...

"Étienne has spoken of his brother on occasion, though never with much charity. He has described him as idle, and has remarked, somewhat bitterly, that the responsibility of his support always falls upon him."

The clerk does not know where Armand might live.

DELAROCHE, THE GLASS DEALER

This upscale glass, chandelier, and lamp shop features rows of blown-glass lamps, decanters, and mirrored display cases. It is open from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. most days, although its owner, FELIX MARIVAUX often stays late to work on his personal projects.

Felix is a neat old man who comes from five generations of glass merchants, and has an insatiable curiosity for the unusual. He welcomes people into his shop, though is snobbish towards anyone who looks unable to afford his wares.

On the missing lantern...

"Ah yes, I had heard that the opera's original lantern – really an inexpensive trifle – disappeared on the very day of the performance. The director dispatched his prop-master posthaste to procure a replacement from my shelves. What struck me as peculiar, however, was that only a few days earlier I had received a note from a Swiss man bidding me set aside a rather unusual specimen, should the Opéra find itself in sudden need. Odd, certainly, though in my experience, those in the artistic professions rarely trouble themselves with ordinary behavior."

On the note's messenger...

"He was a great hulking Swiss fellow... Hans, I believe he called himself, though I confess his accent rendered the name rather uncertain. I paid him little heed at the time, for I could scarcely make out half of what he said. I took him for an emissary of the Opéra, naturally enough... yet now that I reflect upon it, he never actually stated as much."

On the new lantern...

"I flatter myself a discerning collector, but I must confess I had never encountered anything quite like this Threnolume Lantern. There was something in its design... a subtle, twisting asymmetry? It had an unsettling air. At first glance I fancied it might be of Persian workmanship, but the longer I examined it, the more convinced I became that no Eastern school could claim it. The wretched thing would not take a flame – never once! And so I let it languish on my back shelf for years. In fact, I was obliged to keep the object within a box lined in wool, for at times it emitted a peculiar, piercing sound that brought on the most dreadful headaches. I brought it forth only on occasion to perplex the curious and in the hope that some soul might name its origin."

On Maurice Beaumont...

"The textile magnate? Ah! A marvelous customer. I sold him two of my finest chandeliers, yet it was always sound that truly held him; he would linger for ages over my older, more peculiar stock, tapping glass and metal, listening as though each object concealed a note. He fancied himself something of a scholar, I suspect, always bringing books and asking after rare objects from the East, although such things are devilishly hard to obtain. Still, I did succeed in finding a Greek hairpin he desired for a romantic gift of some importance. I swear, he nearly danced with delight when I delivered it."

If asked where Maurice Beaumont lives, Felix will give his home's location on Avenue Montaigne, which he says is above his textile offices, Maison Beaumont & Cie.

On Maurice Beaumont's knowledge of the lantern...

"He asked to examine it on many occasions, hoping to help me decipher its origin. He even made a sketch of the thing once. I had thought he meant to purchase it, yet he always seemed to hesitate when the matter was raised."

On the Greek hairpin...

"It was an ancient Greek hairpin of thin, worked gold, its stem engraved with tiny uneven spiral motifs, reminding me of a coiled serpent. I confess I found the thing quite ugly."

An ARCHAEOLOGY or OCCULTISM roll recalls that serpent-shaped hairpins were not uncommon in the ancient world. However, spiral engravings suggest archaic influences and that perhaps it is a rarer cult object tied to household deities.



ÉTIENNE ALBRET'S APARTMENT

Étienne rents a single narrow room on the upper floor of a tall building just south of the Seine. PCs can obtain his address from either the law firm he works at or asking the police to investigate (which will take a few hours).

His quarters are modest, centered around a writing desk stacked with legal briefs, a narrow iron bed, and a washbasin.

When the PCs arrive, Étienne is sick in bed. The young man is feverish and pale and smells like sour sweat. A DIAGNOSIS+2 roll identifies him as being “down with the grippe” – aka seasonal influenza.

Étienne has not yet heard of the disappearance at the opera, and if he hears of it, will be authentically horrified that his girlfriend along with the entire cast and audience has vanished.

On Corinne d'Orsay...

“I will not deny it. I am a jealous man, as was my father before me, and my brother no less so. It shames me to confess the temper I showed Corinne, and I would give much to take those words back.”

On his brother Armand...

“My brother Armand is my twin, though you would scarce believe we share a face. He has had no luck in securing steady work, and so I have provided for him as best I may. This dependence has not sweetened his disposition; indeed, his temper has grown darker with each passing month. Corinne confessed she found him unsettling, even rude when I was not present, though he always greeted me with forced warmth. Still, he appeared at my door yesterday with a tureen of soup, prepared as though in some brotherly devotion. I suppose I must take comfort in that small kindness, for I am the only kin he has left in this world.”

Étienne will give his brother's address near Rue du Château d'Eau, if the PCs have earned his trust.

On Monsieur Maurice Beaumont...

“I do not trust the manner in which that fellow gazes upon my darling Corinne; there is a covetous gleam in his eyes he scarcely troubles to hide. Corinne thinks me overwrought and only last week pressed me to entreat him on my brother's behalf, that he might find some situation in the man's great textile concern. Armand says he had words with him yesterday, and that a position may soon be his. If so, I shall count it a blessing—for it would ease me greatly to have my brother Armand no longer dependent upon my charity.”

Étienne does not know where Maurice Beaumont lives, however, as he has only talked to him at the opera.

On the opera...

“I attended a rehearsal once but it was enough to hear my Corinne's voice in full bloom. Heaven itself could scarce produce a sweeter sound. But the stares! I loathed how the audience gazed upon her, as if admiring something that belonged to me alone. Yet I cannot deny the brilliance of the story—the lantern guiding her through darkness toward the one heart meant for hers.”

On the missing lantern...

“I did not hear that it went missing. To lose such an important prop would be a disaster for that performance.”

On the strange reptilian creature...

“I trust you are speaking in jest, for such things do not exist.”

Étienne is too weak to leave his apartment, although he will make a poor attempt at it if he knows Corinne is in danger.

ARMAND ALBRET'S ATTIC ROOM

Maurice Beaumont paid Armand Albret to replace the prop lantern with the cursed one purchased from Delaroche. He then ordered him, after the audience vanished, to blindfold himself with gauze, retrieve the lantern, and sweep through the opera's lower levels, erasing anyone left behind.

Cold and efficient, Armand carried out the task and slipped away, retiring to his shabby attic room off Rue du Château d'Eau, a neighborhood crowded with tough factory workers and cheap café. In the hours that have passed, Armand has become increasingly bitter that Beaumont has yet to deliver the position he was promised.

During the day, Armand cleans dishes at the café across the street from his quarters. At night, he returns to his poor man's room, a place that only contains a small iron stove, a narrow cot, and a trunk of old clothes. Armand keeps his room locked during the day, but the lock is cheap and can be picked with a **LOCKPICKING+1** roll or a **ST** roll vs. the hinge's **ST 11**. Note, however, that breaking the door open is likely to cause a neighbor to grow concerned, and either confront the PCs or rush outside to let Armand know what has happened.

When the PCs find Armand, he may react in a few ways. At first, he assumes that they have come to offer him an offer of employment from Maurice Beaumont. Once that illusion is broken (as it likely will be), he instead takes them for debt collectors—or worse, investigators pursuing the opera house affair after Beaumont's betrayal.

In either of those last two cases, he'll scream for the PCs to leave him alone, threatening them with his knife or the gun he hides in his trunk. His tirade will attract one of his friends in the building, **CROCS**, an ill-tempered drunk who is quick to help Armand throw any interlopers from the place (perhaps even from the window, which would result in a deadly fall doing 3d cr damage). However, if either of the two men are badly wounded, they will try to escape into the streets.

Crocs: ST 12, DX 11, IQ 9, HT 10. Alcoholism; Bad Temper; High Pain Threshold. Axe/Mace-11; Brawling-13; Guns-11; Knife-12. He carries a knobbed club (1d+3 cr, Parry 8) but wields it at -2 since he's drunk. To make up for this, he usually all-out attacks!

There are clues to be found here. On the floor is a **gauze bandage with a knot** in it – the mostly-opaque blindfold Armand used to retrieve the lantern while avoiding its worst effects. In the pocket of a jacket hanging on the door is a calling card from Beaumont, which gives instructions to Armand to return the lantern when he is done with it (**Handout J**). Finally,

Armand Albret

Ne'er-do-well and Scoundrel

| | | | |
|----|----|-------|----|
| ST | 11 | HP: | 11 |
| DX | 12 | Will: | 11 |
| IQ | 10 | Per: | 10 |
| HT | 12 | FP: | 12 |



| | | | |
|--------------|-----|--------|---------|
| Basic Speed: | 6.0 | SM: | 0 |
| Move: | 6 | Punch: | 1d-2 cr |
| Dodge: | 9 | | |

Traits: High Pain Threshold; Intolerance (Wealthy folk); Jealousy; Poor. Suffers from constant headaches since the opera.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Paris)-10; Brawling-13; Climbing-11; Guns-12; Knife-13.

Gear: He carries a small knife on him (1d-2 cut, Parry 8, Reach C,1). In a trunk in his room he has a Lefoucheux 1854 revolver which is poorly maintained (1d+2 pi+, Acc 2, Range 100/1,100, RoF 1, Shots 6 (5i), Bulk -2, Rcl 2, Malf 16+).

Notes: Armand is a hardened man who is largely unfazed by what he did at the opera. He's grown increasingly angry that he has not received a well-paying job from Maurice Beaumont after performing his grim task.

thrown under the bed is the opera's original lantern, which Armand stole from the performance.

Armand will only be motivated to talk when he believes there is something to gain or someone to trust. If the investigators pose as agents of Beaumont, speak sympathetically, acknowledge his jealousy toward his brother, or offer him a way out, he becomes more willing to open up, especially if they show knowledge of the blindfold or the lantern. When he feels pitied or promised safety, he shifts from hostility to bargaining and begins revealing details. Good roleplaying, perhaps augmented by a **DIPLOMACY** or similar roll, helps here, especially if made by someone of lower status.

However, if the PCs arrive as haughty authority figures, threaten him, confront him violently, or corner him in front of Crocs, he will likely refuse to talk and instead fight or flee. He is not suicidal though, and will surrender if seriously wounded or caught. If by some chance Armand is killed, any missing information he has will be had by his neighbor Crocs, who he complained to regularly.

On the Threnolune Lantern...

"I returned it to Beaumont after the performance last evening. He was in some haste, and took a carriage bound for the historical quarter. He assured me we should meet this following morning, an assurance which he did not trouble himself to keep."

The historical quarter is where Beaumont's discreet gaming salon, Le Salon De Amis Discrets, is located and where Beaumont is hiding with both the lantern, and his phonograph. If asked, Armand will give directions to the salon.

On Maurice Beaumont...

"I spoke to him about a job at his textile company many times. He only offered me low-paying wages delivering heavy materials and so I refused. But a few days ago he offered me a more unusual offer. He paid me a great deal of money to go to the opera and wait until the music was quiet. Then, he told me to wear a gauze blindfold that blocked most of my sight, pick up the lantern on stage, and shine its light on any who remained in the opera. I know not what trickery he had planned, but as I shone the light on the horrified stage hands, they seemed to vanish with an unnerving shriek. I returned to his shop this morning, but his stupid Swiss valet told me he had no more work for me."

On the strange reptilian creature...

"I am horrified to confess I have also seen such a thing. I glimpsed it when I was beneath the opera house. It was like a phantom, but when I shone light upon it, it vanished. I assumed it was a figment of my imagination."

On the valet Hans Egger...

"One of the few men I fear. The valet once told me he fought as a mercenary in the war with Prussia, suffered a wound, and returned a changed man."

On his brother, Étienne...

"He might do far more on my behalf, were he so inclined. He possesses everything – an admired and celebrated companion, a position of generous reward... yet he contents himself with steering me toward wealthier men who offer only the most paltry employments! I bear him great affection, it is true, but with each passing year my patience with him wears ever thinner."

If the PCs have discovered the corpse in Beaumont's place, they may think to ask about it:

On Théodore Valfort...

"I believe Valfort was a writer on matters of fashion. I first met him when I approached Beaumont regarding a position. The two of them were emerging from a discreet salon in the historical section of the city. I found Valfort quite insufferable, and I am certain Beaumont held no great fondness for him either."

On who killed Théodore Valfort...

"It was not my doing! I should wager that either Beaumont or that callous Swiss valet of his was involved. Beaumont told me that Valfort published an unflattering piece on his textiles earlier in the season. His trade suffered badly in the weeks that followed."

MAISON BEAUMONT & CIE

Maurice Beaumont's textile offices are in an expensive part of Paris north of the Seine. The name of his business appears in gilt lettering on frosted glass beside a heavy door. Several heavy, paper-wrapped bolts of fabric are stacked outside the door, waiting to be hauled inside. The offices are open from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on weekdays and Saturdays.

Inside the office is a large salon, its floors marble, rolled bolts of wool neatly placed so that clothiers can examine the latest samples. Stairs behind a door in the back of the salon lead up to the luxurious apartment where Maurice Beaumont lives, but this won't be obvious at first.

The office is attended by a young Algerian clerk, HASSAN LARBI, who helps visitors from a fine walnut desk. He is friendly to those who look like they can afford his business, outright rude those who cannot.

On Maurice Beaumont...

"Monsieur Beaumont is the proprietor of this textile house, a gentleman much favored with both commercial sense and artistic feeling. Apologies, but he is presently engaged upon matters of business and may not return for some time."

On Beaumont's apartment...

"Strictly off limits, even to me. The man takes his privacy very seriously, as he should."

On the opera...

"Monsieur Beaumont did attend the opera last night, but left before its conclusion, being indisposed in his stomach. His valet conveyed this to me this morning, and requested that I receive and sign for the overwhelming number of new bolts of wool that arrived today during Monsieur's absence."

On the valet Hans Egger...

"A diligent man, loyal, very Swiss. I am grateful that he is of such a solid build as to carry even the heaviest bolts of wool on my behalf. Although as you can see, he has not yet done that today."

If asked about Egger's whereabouts, Larbi shrugs and says that he comes and goes. If the PCs stake out the offices or linger near them for a while, they will likely see HANS EGGER visit the shop as he performs errands for his patron. Egger is more detailed on p. 16.

On Corinne d'Orsay...

"I am far too occupied to indulge in the idle diversions of the opera, or, for that matter, most of the other entertainments this city offers."

On Armand Albret...

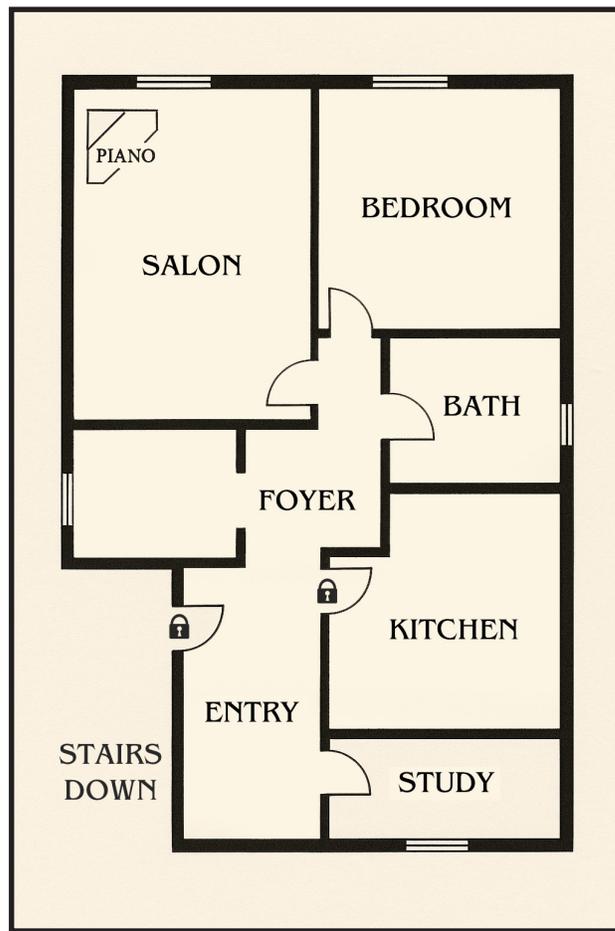
"He called here some days ago to speak with Monsieur Beaumont. In my estimation, he was a disagreeable sort, forever hanging about in search of employment, yet rarely appearing inclined to undertake any real labor."

Getting into Beaumont's apartment takes some cleverness. Even if befriended, it's unlikely that Larbi can be convinced to allow the PCs up, as he knows that he will likely get fired, but a successful FAST-TALK roll against his modified Will 13 will do it. A material bribe, or offering to help move the bolts of wool outside, will add up to a +2 bonus. Intimidation might work as well. However, even on a success, he'll only allow the PCs ten minutes to investigate Beaumont's place.

Hassan Larbi: ST 9, DX 11, IQ 11, HT 10. Intolerance (the poor). Merchant-11. Hates physical labor.

BEAUMONT'S APARTMENT

The heavy door to Beaumont's upstairs apartment is kept locked at all times. It can be picked with a LOCKPICKING-2 roll, or forced open with a ST roll vs. the door's ST 16. Otherwise, the investigators need a key, which is carried by Hans Egger, Beaumont's valet.



The interior of the luxurious apartment is marked by tall windows, polished parquet floors, and shelves of books and discreet art. It smells of tobacco, wool, and wood polish, but a PERCEPTION (SMELL) roll also detects the faint smell of something fishy and decaying coming from inside.

Entry. On the floor in the entrance, the PCs will notice a large, recently-opened **wooden crate**; it is empty except for straw packing material. A packing slip on the inside identifies that whatever was inside was manufactured in Menlo Park, New Jersey, shipped from New York City. Its declared purpose was "scientific and private use" and it arrived a couple of weeks ago.

GM's Note: This was an early phonograph Beaumont acquired from Thomas Edison, modified by himself through dreams brought on by a Denizen of S'ghluo. The missing item can be identified with a CURRENT AFFAIRS (SCIENCE) or RESEARCH-4 roll, or the clerk Hassan Larbi can explain it if asked later.

Salon. The salon is littered with tuning forks of various pitch, brass horns and speaking tubes, stretched membranes of gut and parchment, coils of fine wire, and waxed cylinders. This is where Maurice modified the Edison phonograph to hear sounds from the Howling Vortex.

On a successful PERCEPTION (HEARING)-2 roll, the PCs hear an extremely faint, scratchy sound of a soprano's keening coming from one of the cylinders. An appropriate ENGINEERING roll reveals this is impossible; succeeding such a roll causes a FRIGHT CHECK at the impossibility! The sound is an intermittent remnant of Beaumont's initial contact with the Howling Vortex... Corinne d'Orsay's voice still coming through.

Note that if one of the PCs has received a point in ENGINEERING (ACOUSTIC APPARATUS) from a S'glhuo dream, they will be *fascinated* by the equipment here. They must make a WILL roll or else spend at least one hour studying the equipment per point they failed the roll.

There is a well-made piano in the corner. It bears sheet music is from the newest opera, *La Demoiselle aux Lanternes* although anyone making a MUSICAL COMPOSITION+2 or MUSICAL INSTRUMENT roll identifies it as poorly transcribed; whoever wrote this version of the sheet music was a poor musician.

On top of the piano is a coin-sized brass jeton bearing the abbreviation SdAd (*Le Salon de Amis Discrets*). This token can be matched with the salon through research, talking to high status contacts who might enjoy gambling, or making a CURRENT AFFAIRS (HIGH CULTURE) or AREA KNOWLEDGE-3 roll.

Bath. The bath is a horrific place. A porcelain bathtub is filled with a writhing mass of eels, some still alive and coiling over one another, others having spilled onto the tiles, where they lie dead and stinking. Worse, cast into the corner beneath a rumpled bedsheet, is the barely-clothed body of a man, swollen and discolored from prolonged immersion, his flesh mottled with dozens of circular wounds where the eels have fed. This sight calls for a FRIGHT CHECK-3!

An investigation of the corpse finds that his hands are bound; a DIAGNOSIS or PHYSICIAN roll reveals that while he has a head wound, he died from exposure; he was left in the bath for days, slowly eaten by the eels before he succumbed. He's been dead for over five days. A **bloody calling card** (**Handout G**) can be found nearby identifying him as Théodore Valfort. A CURRENT AFFAIRS (POP CULTURE or PEOPLE) roll recalls him as being a society writer who wrote fashion coverage for *Le Figaro*, a popular newspaper.

 If you are playing with the pregenerated character Claire Marchand, she recognizes this man (-2 to that Fright Check!). It is her brother, the man she's been searching for. A week ago, he was knocked out by Hans Egger, brought here, and killed.

Bedroom. The master bedroom is neat and composed, with several portraits of opera singers on the walls. Several books

on a shelf allude to the occult. One particularly heavily-used book (which a PERCEPTION (VISION) roll spots) is called *A Record of Profane Relics*, an unnerving tome that contains information on the Threnolume Lantern (see **Handout H**).

Kitchen. The kitchen is locked. The key is on Beaumont, and so entry can only be gained by a LOCKPICKING roll, or forced open with a ST roll vs. the door hinges' ST 11. Inside, the smell is overwhelming. More eels have been sliced and cut open, their fattiest flesh removed. Pots of thick, congealed oil has been heated on the stove. A COOKING roll finds that someone was clumsily make oil from the eels. Searching the kitchen finds a gold **serpent hairpin** in a drawer, covered in eel blood, which can be used as a dagger.

Examining the hairpin and making a HISTORY or ARCHAEOLOGY roll finds that its design, while vaguely Greek in origin, have alien details on them as well. Also, the serpent head bears ears and is misshapen; it is unlike any that might be found in a museum.

GM's Note: An OCCULTISM roll knows that this hairpin was crafted as a defense against Tru'nembra, a horrible outer god made from raw sound. Unlike other physical objects, it can hurt denizens from his universe, such as the Denizens of S'glhuo.

THE RICHELIEU LIBRARY

Thoughtful investigators may decide to visit the national library to research the case. Located near the Palais Garnier, the library holds a vast collections of books, manuscripts, maps, music, and even a few forbidden works. It is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. on most days. GMs can let the players find out more about some of the people and places in the adventure here, but specifically they can research:

- An hour among the newspapers and a RESEARCH+2 roll finds the full name and employment location of Corinne d'Orsay's boyfriend, Étienne Albret.
- An hour and a RESEARCH+1 roll finds Théodore Valfort's scathing article in *Le Figaro* on Maurice Beaumont's textiles: "The weaves uneven, the dyes uncertain, and the finishes such that it flatters the eye only at a distance."
- A RESEARCH roll and four hours in the stacks looking for information on the lantern finds an 1811 copy of *A Record of Profane Relics*, that describes the Threnolume lantern (**Handout H**). This is identical to the copy found in Beaumont's apartment.
- A RESEARCH roll and four hours in the newspaper room finds a curious story about an 1871 man who went mad building music boxes (see **Handout I**). No more information on this man or his shop can be found.

Hans Egger - The Odious Valet

After suffering a grievous blow to the head during the Franco-Prussian War, Hans Egger was withdrawn from the battlefield and confined in an asylum in Paris. Upon his release, he entered the service of Maurice Beaumont, acting as valet and man of confidence. He is a presence not easily disregarded.

Egger is heavily involved in Maurice's plot. He abducted Théodore Valfort and delivered his body to Beaumont's apartment so that Beaumont could use him to feed the eels to make the infernal lantern oil. Egger delivered the note to Delaroché to sell the Threnolome lantern to the opera. Egger is the only man who knows that Beaumont is holed up in the gaming salon, *Le Salon de Amis Discrets*.

EGGER'S WHEREABOUTS

Egger spends his days running errands, mostly going back and forth from the Maison Beaumont & Cie textile offices to help receive deliveries and the gaming salon to speak to Beaumont, who has him busy researching new operas to "possess."

It's possible for the PCs to see Egger at the textile office and shadow him back to the gaming salon, but if he thinks that the PCs are investigating Beaumont, or are involved with the opera in any way, he will purposely avoid leading them to the salon. He's not stupid.

However, on the evening of the second day of the investigation, Beaumont gives Egger two new orders. First, he orders him to clean up the dead body of Théodore Valfort in his apartment. If the PCs are at the apartment after 6 p.m., they will likely encounter him. After he cleans up the body under the cover of darkness (dumping it in the Seine), he'll then move north to find Armand Albret, where he has been ordered to kill him, so as not to leave any witnesses to the events of the opera. Here, the PCs may encounter him as well.

CONFRONTING EGGER

Egger is brusque and terse man. He has no tolerance for idle chit chat. He's also smart enough to spot attempts to trick or fast-talk him. So, if confronted about anything other than normal-seeming business, he'll angrily dismiss the PCs and even threaten them. Under no circumstance will he admit that he has any knowledge of the opera, the lantern, or either of the Albret brothers.

Egger won't usually resort to violence in public. However, in private, he will absolutely defend himself, and then try to escape to either Beaumont's apartment or the gaming salon.

Hans Egger Maurice Beaumont's Valet

| | | | |
|----|----|-------|----|
| ST | 13 | HP: | 13 |
| DX | 12 | Will: | 13 |
| IQ | 12 | Per: | 12 |
| HT | 12 | FP: | 12 |



Basic Speed: 6.0 SM: 0
Move: 6 Punch: 1d-1 cr
Dodge: 10

Traits: Callous; Combat Reflexes; Duty (M. Beaumont); Hard to Subdue 1; High Pain Threshold; No Sense of Humor; Fluent in German, speaks Accented French. Mutteres to himself.

Skills: Area Knowledge (Paris)-12; Brawling-14; Guns-12; Holdout-12; Intimidation-13; Knife-12; Savoir-Faire-12; Scrounging-12; Shortsword-13; Soldier-11; Streetwise-12.

Gear: He often openly carries a heavy baton, hidden inside an umbrella (2d-1 cr, Parry 10, Reach 1), and a new Webley .442 revolver (1d+2 pi+, Acc 1, Range 110/1200, RoF 3, Shots 6 (3i), Bulk -1, Rcl 3). He has a key to Beaumont's apartment. He also carries a brass *jeton*, a token with the abbreviation *SdAd* (*Le Salon de Amis Discrets*) on it, something he often fiddles with in his hand. This token can be matched with the salon with either some research, talking to high status contacts who will recognize the place, or making a CURRENT AFFAIRS (HIGH CULTURE) or AREA KNOWLEDGE-3 roll.



Despite his hard nature, Egger can still yield clues. If encountered, the PCs may shadow him back to Beaumont's refuge at the gaming salon, or catch him in the midst of a crime – disposing of Valfort's body or attempting to silence Armand. He also carries a coin-like gaming jeton marked *SdAd*, matching one found in Beaumont's apartment; it may be dropped in a scuffle or stolen outright, and serves as a lead to Beaumont's whereabouts at the Salon de Mis Descrets.

GM TIPS ON EGGER

Hans Egger is a good tool for GMs. If the PCs missed clues along the way and are having difficulty locating Beaumont, Egger can be a source of new clues. He can also make a mid-adventure antagonist, escalating the danger as he shows up during a scene to clean up Beaumont's mess, threaten the PCs to cease their investigation, or outright try to kill them.

ACT THREE

The Howling Vortex

Eventually the PCs will find themselves at the "Salon of Discreet Friends," a secret gaming house preferred by Paris most wealthy men. Here, Maurice Beaumont has locked himself in a private room, listening to the vanished opera singers who are trapped and turned into sound in the Howling Vortex, playing endlessly on his Edison phonograph. There are three main ways for the PCs to find this location:

- **The Jetons.** There are two tokens in the adventure with the abbreviation of the salon on them ("SdAd"). One is in Beaumont's apartment, the other is carried by his valet, Hans Egger. This token can be matched with the salon with either some research at the library, talking to high status contacts who will recognize the place, or making a **CURRENT AFFAIRS (HIGH CULTURE)** or **AREA KNOWLEDGE (PARIS)-3** roll.
- **Shadowing Eggers.** Stealthy PCs can shadow the valet to the salon. However, if he notices he's being shadowed, he'll confront the PCs (see p. 16).
- **Armand Albret.** If the PCs find the body of Théodore Valfort at Beaumont's home, and think to ask Armand Albret about it, Armand will recall meeting both Beaumont and Valfort at this location.

LE SALON DE AMIS DISCRETS

The gaming salon occupies the upper floor of a narrow Haussmann building. It is unmarked save for a discreet brass lantern beside the door, which bears the initials SdAd. Tall shuttered windows overlook the street, revealing nothing of the high-stakes wagers carried on within.

If the unmarked door is knocked upon, it is opened just a little by a porter, KELLER. He examines the PCs for their attire and mannerisms, looking for signs that they are not wealthy enough to enter, or perhaps figures from the authorities who may want to gain entry. Fine attire and a **SAVOIR-FAIRE (HIGH SOCIETY)** roll is usually enough to gain entry, otherwise the PCs must do great roleplaying or roll well on their social skills. Saying that they are "friends of Maurice Beaumont" will also help, but the porter will scold the PCs for using real names here.

Once inside, the PCs will be ushered through heavy curtains into the main gaming salon. Here, a dozen or so well-dressed serious men play cards – mostly baccarat and whist – at vari-

ous tables talking about debts, favors, and reputations. No one glances up at the PCs. Attendants silently walk from guest to guest, offering cognac or absinthe. If the PCs quietly observe the men (and make an **OBSERVATION** roll) they'll hear the men quietly complaining to headaches all morning. The PCs will also notice none of the men seem to use their real names.

If the PCs inquire to attendants as to the whereabouts of Maurice Beaumont they won't divulge anything other than "he asked not to be bothered, I'm afraid."

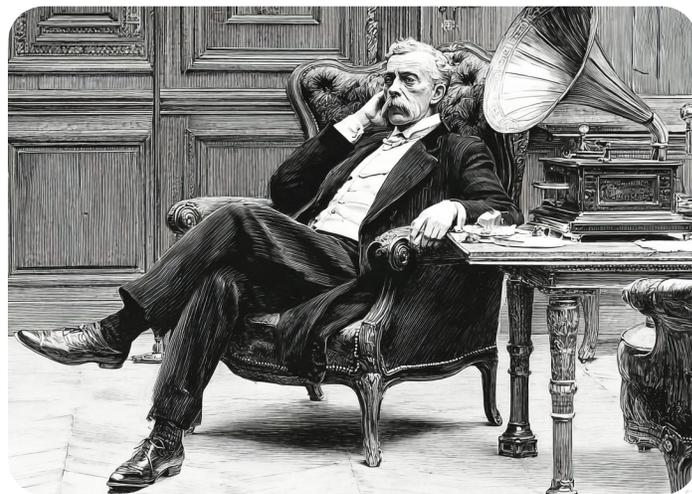
If the PCs mingle with the gamblers, perhaps building trust with gambling or a **CAROUSING** roll, they'll find one man, **MONSIEUR TROIS-COUPS** ("Mister Three-Knocks") who says that Beaumont rented out one of the two private salons upstairs and that he's been locked up there all day.

BEAUMONT'S PRIVATE SALON

Above the main floor of the gaming salon is a hallway that leads to two doors. One door is ajar, revealing a luxurious private salon, although no one is using it.

The second door is locked. PCs hear faint, scratchy opera-like music coming from within the room. The music is familiar, but strangely structured, as if it is both missing and has too many notes at once.

No one will answer the door. The door must be either picked, broken open with a **ST** roll vs. the hinges' **ST 12**, or a key found (two of the attendants have one, but they must be fast-talked or otherwise tricked into giving one up).



Here, in the private salon, sits Maurice Beaumont. He is sunk into a deep leather wingback armchair. The horn of his phonograph presses close, spilling a thin, unending music, singers' voices stretched and keening, more like suffering than song. His face is bloodless, his eyes glassy and distended. At your entrance he twitches sharply, yet shows no surprise, only dull awareness.

"Ah! How fortunate. We are no longer alone. Do come in, my friends, and listen to the music of the vortex. Is it not astonishing? Can you not hear eternity itself breathing through it? How splendidly it endures. How faithfully it sings. And is it not marvelous... marvelous! what I have accomplished? An unceasing opera does not end. It cannot end. It is mine forever."

In the corner of the room is a small credenza. On it is the unlit Threnolume Lantern. Because it contains eel-oil, it is still dangerous!

On the phonograph...

"I procured the phonograph from the finest of minds America, though I greatly improved it, guided by the dreams that have plagued me ever since I beheld the Threnolume Lantern. Is it not marvelous? Consider it... music without end, Corinne's voice at my ear for all eternity!"

On the lantern...

"I entertained the notion of returning it to Delaroché, but no, no, a far better idea has presented itself. I mean to go on to Munich next, to the opera there, and add to my collection. I am told they boast a remarkable new soprano – surpassing even Corinne d'Orsay, if you can credit it!"

On the evil of his deeds...

"But I have done no wrong! None whatsoever! Valfort? A preening scribbler, of no earthly use save to injure those far better than himself. And the opera? Why, I have merely allowed them to do what they were born to do – to sing for eternity, their voices preserved forever in perfect youth."

On Armand Albret...

"He was a useful fool, stirred by avarice and nothing more. He is of no consequence to me now."

Maurice Beaumont

Obsessed Magnate & Opera Devotee

| | | | |
|----|----|-------|----|
| ST | 11 | HP: | 11 |
| DX | 12 | Will: | 10 |
| IQ | 12 | Per: | 12 |
| HT | 12 | FP: | 12 |



| | | | |
|--------------|-----|--------|---------|
| Basic Speed: | 6.0 | SM: | +0 |
| Move: | 6 | Punch: | 1d-2 cr |
| Dodge: | 9 | | |

Traits: Obsession (Possess all the music); Overconfidence; Status 3; Very Wealthy.

Skills: Engineer (Acoustic Apparatus)-11; Gambling-11; Guns-12; Mathematics-10; Merchant-12; Savoir-Faire-12.

Notes: Maurice Beaumont is a wealthy textile magnate of cultivated tastes and iron self-command, long devoted to the opera, though he himself possesses no gift for music beyond admiration. Beneath this polish festered an obsession with the Threnolume Lantern, a cursed object he believed could preserve beauty beyond decay. Fearful of wielding it directly, yet driven by a collector's envy of what he could never create, Beaumont engineered the destruction of *La Demoiselle aux Lanternes*, consigning performers and audience alike to the Howling Vortex so that sound itself might be owned, perfected, and eternal. When found at last, Beaumont listens still... rapt, unmusical, and irretrievably mad.

On Corinne D'Orsay...

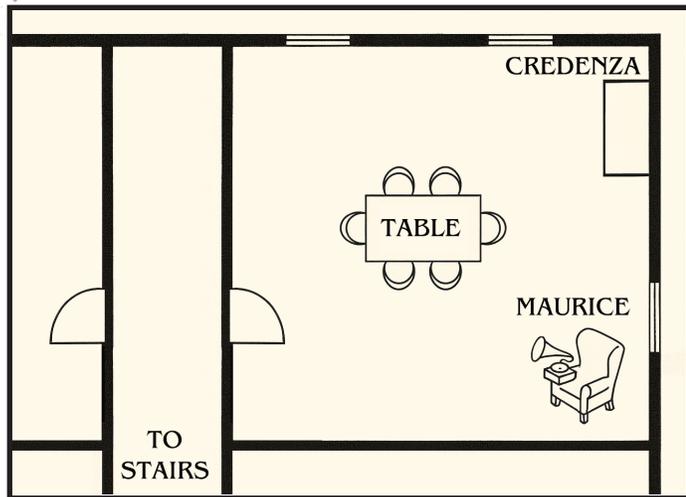
"Her voice rises above all others, unmistakable and radiant. I confess I was once quite taken with her... but such infatuations are ever fleeting. Like all ingénues who have captured my fancy, she will dim in time, and I shall fasten my admiration upon another."

On "us"...

"A servant of Tru'nembra, the Angel of Music itself, is here with me! He delights in the sound as I do. In time, I am certain, others of his kind will come as well, drawn by the music's call."

COMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

There is no real reasoning with Beaumont. He has already started to mad from listening to the phonograph. In fact, if the PCs linger in the room for more than a few minutes, they must make a WILL roll or else start admiring the sounds from



the Vortex, giving them a distracting -1 to all mental skills while they begin to appreciate it.

If the PCs approach Beaumont, he warns them back. If they get within a few yards of him, the Denizen of S'ghluo who invisibly lurks into the room will flicker into existence (causing a FRIGHT CHECK-2 to anyone who hasn't seen it before) and blast foes with a cry that sounds like layered howls that contain no single pitch. The denizen has no desire to let the investigators interrupt Beaumont's music from the void. The denizen will continue to defend the phonograph, blasting PCs until stopped. Because denizens are immune to physical damage, only loud dissonant sounds (such as a musical instrument, or crashing pots and pans) do any damage. The **serpent hairpin** can also damage the denizen (treat it like a dagger), as can the ritual found in the library.

If the PCs approach the lantern, Beaumont will bark for them to get away from it. He's protective of it and will lunge for the thing with surprising speed. Assuming the PCs are equal distance to it, the higher Move will get there first. On a tie, roll a Quick Contest of DX (Beaumont gains +2 due to his crazed state). If Beaumont gets to the lantern first, he will threaten to unleash it. However, this takes a bit of time to raise the wick – a couple seconds to turn its thumb wheel – so it can might be wrestled from him before he can use it. If it crashes to the ground it has a 50% chance of shattering and exploding in a horrendous cacophony, sucking anyone within five yards into the Howling Vortex! A more violent action (such as throwing it intentionally on the ground) will cause this to happen automatically.

Finally, if the PCs have not yet dealt with Hans Egger elsewhere, or have somehow provoked him, he may enter the salon, either by chance or at the summons of one of the gamblers downstairs.

Denizen of S'ghluo

Servant of Tru'nembra

| | | | |
|----|----|-------|----|
| ST | 15 | HP: | 15 |
| DX | 14 | Will: | 13 |
| IQ | 13 | Per: | 13 |
| HT | 13 | FP: | 13 |



Basic Speed: 7.75 SM: +1
Move: 7 Blast: 2d cr
Dodge: 10

Traits: Cannot Speak; Enhanced Move; Flight; Injury Tolerance (Diffuse); Insubstantiality; Invisibility (Usually On); Skinny; Vulnerability x2 (Loud Dissonant Sounds, Serpent Hairpin).

Sundered Chord: 2d-2 (5) cor, jet, Range 10/100, Skill-12. HT roll or victim develops Hard of Hearing temporarily.

Notes: Denizens of S'ghluo dwell in distant universes where they worship the outer god Tru'nembra. They are entirely made from sound, although humans occasionally glimpse them as tall, lank reptiles with pupil-less eyes and boneless fingers. Hearing a denizen requires a FRIGHT CHECK. *Seeing* one calls for a FRIGHT CHECK-2! Denizens cannot speak, but communicate to humans through dreams that inspire them to build devices that allow them entry into our world. The only way to harm a denizen is with magic or loud discordant sounds (including the phonograph or lantern getting destroyed), which do 1d to 3d damage depending on volume and complexity.

In any case, Hans brings further complication to the scene. He is loyal to his master, and concerned only with shielding Beaumont from danger and escorting him back to the comfort of his apartment.

If the phonograph is destroyed, two things happen. First, the link between this universe and the Gulf of S'ghluo is severed. The denizen must make a Will roll each turn to remain in this universe. Second, this enrages Beaumont, driving him to utter madness. If the lantern is within his grasp, he'll grab for it, attempting to light or shatter it and bring him into the Howling Vortex, so that he can permanently be with the voices he craves. If he cannot, he all-out attacks the PCs using whatever improvised weapons he can find, until he is killed or subdued.

THE DREAMERS' OBSESSION

If one of the PCs has received a point in ENGINEERING (ACOUSTIC APPARATUS) from a dream sent by the Denizens of S'ghluo, they will be fascinated by the phonograph. They

INTO THE HOWLING VORTEX

If the PCs are drawn into the Howling Vortex, most likely because the lantern shatters nearby, they are instantly stripped of flesh, their bodies unmade and translated into raw sound, hurled screaming across universes and into the waves of the Gulf of S'glhuo. This transformation alone calls for a FRIGHT CHECK-10.

In the Vortex, all around them resound the voices of the opera. Corinne d'Orsay dominates the tumult, but she is not alone: tenors and basses cry out, a violin keens endlessly, a solitary harp plucks without pause. Worse still, these harmonies are fouled by the pleading screams of the audience and crew, mingled with the wet, guttural utterances of those who have already gone mad.

Time loses all meaning within the Vortex. Moments stretch, fracture, or repeat without order. FRIGHT CHECKS continue as the voices erode identity itself, until they are reduced to nothing but echoes.

Escape from the Vortex is difficult, but not impossible. A WILL-6 roll allows a PC to collect what remains of their self and force expulsion from the Vortex. Structured thinking helps here! A successful MATHEMATICS, SINGING, or MUSICAL COMPOSITION roll gives +1 to the Will roll. Kind GMs may allow a PC to pull another soul with him in the escape, but this requires the second subject to make their own WILL-3 roll to go with them (assume anyone from the opera has Will 9-12).

The escaped subject reappears at random within 100 yards of their disappearance. They return scarred, suffering 6d corrosion damage, reduced by 1d for each point by which the roll succeeds, as their body tears itself free from the cacophony.

must make a WILL roll to take up any action that might destroy it. If the PC has developed an Obsession, the roll is WILL-5 to harm it or a Denizen of S'glhuo and if this roll is failed, the PC will gain the urge to take sole possession of the equipment here and listen forever to the unceasing music, much as Beaumont is doing!

FINALE

With careful action, the PCs can subdue Maurice Beaumont. His madness worsening, he will admit to his crimes to the

police, telling all if they just promise to let him keep his precious phonograph. Without it, he'll succumb to a wasting illness in a few weeks and perish.

For their work solving the case, Inspector Morel thanks the PCs and gives them a small reward of \$100. If by some miracle the PCs have rescued a few people from the Howling Vortex (perhaps going in themselves and bringing others out with them) they will earn a larger reward from the families of the victims, as long as they arrive relatively intact.

COMPLETING THE ADVENTURE

For completing the adventure, the PCs should receive 2 character points. They should receive an additional 1-2 character points for good roleplaying or excellent performance, such as capturing Maurice Beaumont so as to get a confession.

GMs should freely confer various Reputations, Contacts, or Patrons for befriending any of the influential folk in the adventure, especially Inspector Morel and Etienne Albret.

CREDITS

The cover design was loosely based on Red Classics' *Phantom of the Opera* cover.

For more adventures like this, visit www.1shotadventures.com. If you enjoyed this free adventure, or ran it for a group, all the author asks is that you give a shout out and let him know how it went. Post a note on 1shotadventures.com or give a shoutout to @1shotjc.bsky.social on Bluesky. You can also check out my [YouTube channel](#) to see overviews and reviews of great adventures.

MISCELLANEOUS

This adventure uses the *Knowing Your Own Strength* optional rules for damage (see *Pyramid* 3/83).

DISCLAIMER

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CHANGE LOG

v1.0 - Original release.

HANDOUTS

BRIGADE DE SÛRETÉ

I must beg the favor of your presence on this Wednesday evening, at four o'clock, in the Rotonde du Glacien, adjoining the Grand Staircase of the Palais Garnier.

A matter of the utmost seriousness has arisen in connection with the performance of last night, one which concerns both the reputation of the Opéra and the safety of certain persons attached to it. I would prefer to speak with you privately, and I trust you will understand the necessity of discretion.

I shall be waiting near the marble balustrade.

*Respectfully,
Inspecteur Principal Lucien Morel
Brigade de Sûreté, Préfecture de Police*

Handout A - Letter from Inspector Morel delivered to each of the PCs, kicking off the adventure.

Grand Opera.

A. VAUCORBEIL - - Director of the Opera.

Tuesday, November 25, Tenth Subscription Night.

VALMONT.

LA DEMOISELLE AUX LANTERNES!

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| CLAIRINE..... | CORINNE D'ORSAY |
| THE WATCHMAN OF SAINT-ROCH..... | GASTON RAVIER |
| BERTRAND VALLORY..... | JULES BRÉVANT |
| VICTOR DE MIREVAL..... | HENRI LAROQUE |

And

| | |
|---------------------------------|---------------|
| LADY OF THE SHADOWED FOYER..... | HÉLÈNE DUFORT |
|---------------------------------|---------------|

Handout B - The opera's bill, easily found outside and inside the opera house.

HANDOUTS

Monsieur Lefèvre—

The soprano's lantern has vanished, and this lapse is utterly inexcusable. You will replace it at once—there is a reasonable sum enclosed for the purchase. Try Delaroche on the Rue Saint-Honoré if the original is not recovered by noon. I expect this matter corrected immediately, with no further embarrassment to the house.

—A.F.

Handout C - Letter from the director to the propmaster

My Dearest Corinne,

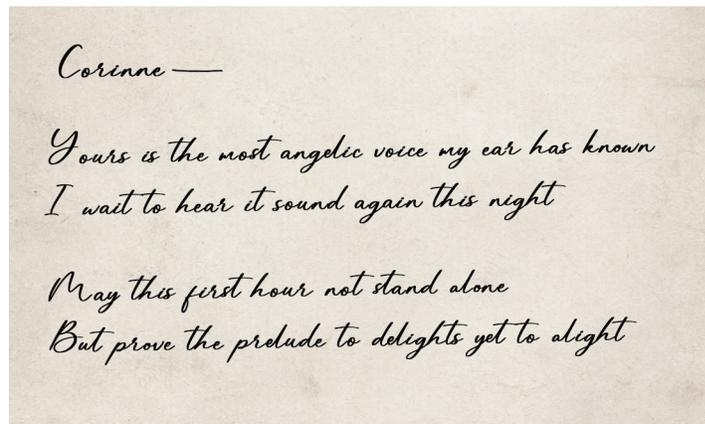
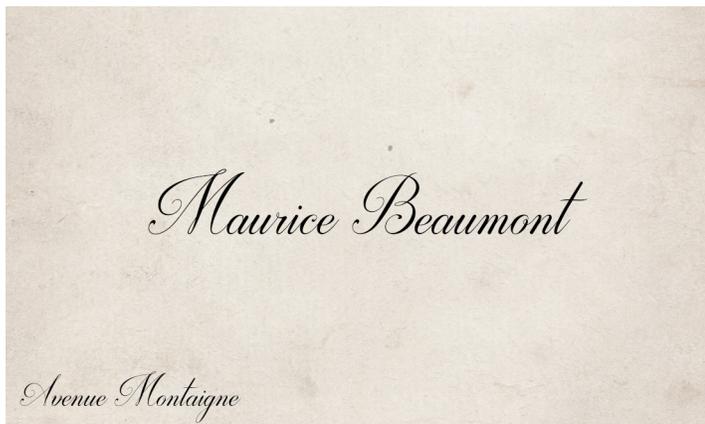
I cannot endure the thought of tomorrow night, when you shall display yourself before that gaudy crowd who applaud only the curve of your smile and the shape of your form.

You are not theirs to gaze upon. You are mine, and I implore you, no, I require you, to abandon this foolish debut. If your affections are as true as you have sworn, you will not step upon that stage and surrender yourself to that ravenous house.

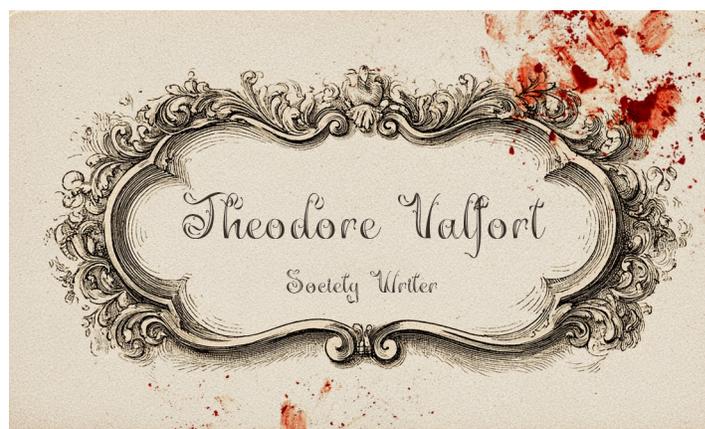
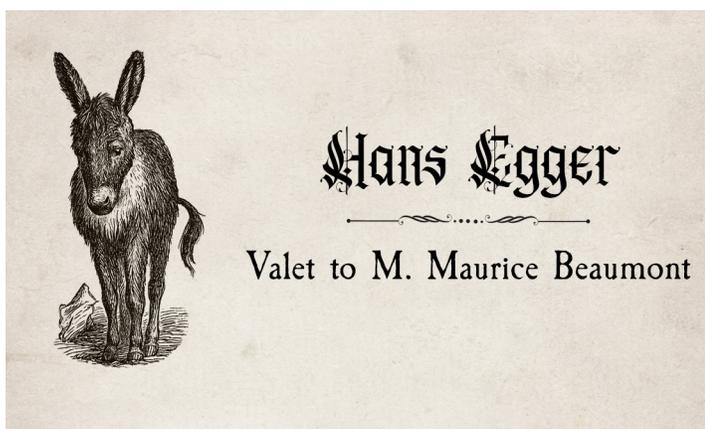
—Étienne

Handout D - Crumpled note from Corinne D'Orsay's boyfriend, Etienne Albret, found in her dressing room

HANDOUTS



Handout E - Maurice Beaumont's calling card, found in Corinne D'Orsay's dressing room.



Handout F - Hans Egger's calling card, found in Box Five at the opera

Handout G - Theodore Valfort's bloody calling card, found on his corpse in Beaumont's apartment.



HANDOUTS



THE THRENOLUME LANTERNS

Of the Threnolume Lantern, no certain provenance may be established, for its markings answer to no known school of art or craft. Yet those versed in the more perilous branches of occult philosophy have noted that its sigils accord most closely with the blasphemous diagrams preserved in the forbidden writings attributed to the so-called Mad Arab. In those detestable pages, a Demon-Sultan enthroned amid a court of piping horrors, and some authorities dare to suggest that the lantern was once numbered among that entity's possessions. Whatever truth lies in such claims, it is beyond dispute that the lantern opens a passage to a howling vortex of the Gulf of S'glhuo, a realm wherein the soul is unmade and reduced to vibration alone. Those few who have returned from that place speak only in fragments, their reason pared away like excess flesh.

The lantern is mercifully resistant to casual use, for it rejects all common oils and will burn only when fed with a most abominable unction: tallow rendered from eels engorged upon the flesh of a man who died screaming. When thus lit, it gives forth a pale, whining radiance that chills the blood and drinks eagerly of sound, until at last its light darkens and reveals its true office — dragging all souls within its glow into the vortex entire.

Let the reader be warned: to shatter the lantern while it yet contains its oil is folly of the gravest kind, for it will answer destruction with dissonance, and draw all nearby souls screaming into the same eternal captivity.

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Handout H - Occult page on the Threnolume lantern, found in Beaumont's apartment, or at the library. An OCCULTISM roll connects the Gulf of S'glhuo and its denizens to Ten'embra, an outer god known as the "Angel of Music" who is composed of pure sound.

HANDOUTS

A SINGULAR CASE OF MECHANICAL DELUSION

Paris has lately been much amused, and not a little unsettled, by the fate of a certain dealer in musical boxes of the Rue du Temple, once esteemed for his modest workmanship, who has fallen into a state of evident derangement. Neighbors report that his constructions grew daily more elaborate and less comprehensible, until they would no longer play any recognizable air. He himself was heard to declare, with alarming sincerity, "The lizards come to me in my sleep and show me the proper turnings of the springs and teeth; they are older than we are, and they remember the true music." Shortly thereafter, the unfortunate man was removed from his shop, having attempted to dismantle it in pursuit of a final and impossible mechanism.

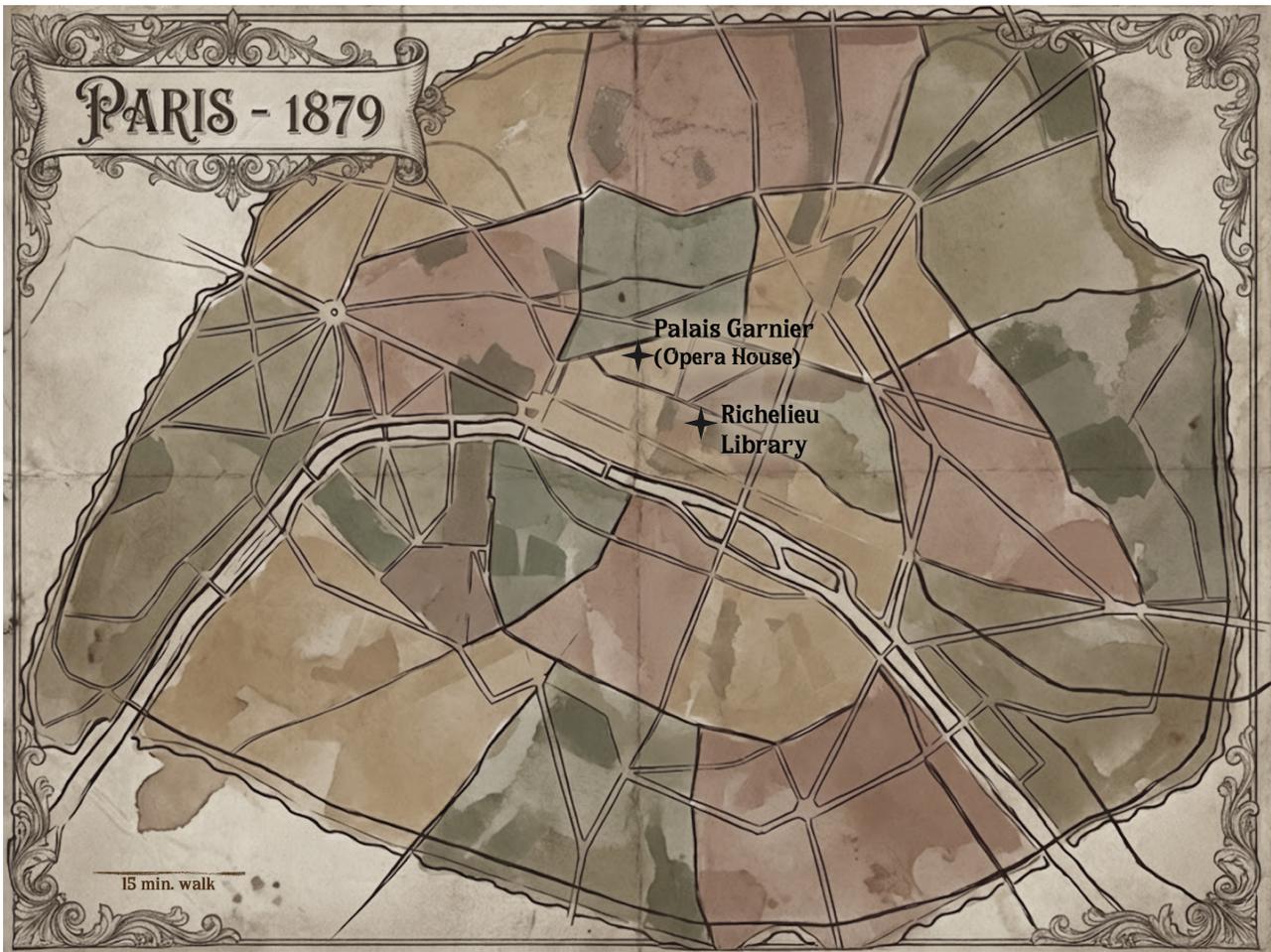
Handout I - Newspaper clipping found at the library.

Mr. Albret —

When you have concluded your task, you will return the lantern to my offices without delay. I shall later dispatch my valet to confer with you regarding a position of a most remunerative nature.

Handout J - Reverse of Maurice Beaumont's calling card, found in Armand Albret's room.

Player Safe Map



GURPS VICTORIAN HORROR

Name ÉLODIE FAURE Player _____ Point Total 100
 Ht 5'8" Wt 115 Size Modifier 0 Age 21 Unspent Pts -
 Appearance Poor-born maid, luminous mind, and rising detective (in silence)

| | | | | | |
|-----------|----|--------|-------------|----|--------|
| ST | 10 | [0] | HP | 10 | [0] |
| DX | 11 | [20] | WILL | 12 | [0] |
| IQ | 12 | [40] | PER | 14 | [10] |
| HT | 12 | [20] | FP | 12 | [0] |

CURRENT

| |
|-------------|
| MOVE |
| 5 |
| DR |
| - |



BASIC LIFT (ST × ST)/5 20 lbs DAMAGE Thr 1d-2 Sw 1d
 BASIC SPEED 5.75 [0] BASIC MOVE 5 [0]

| ENCUMBRANCE | |
|-----------------------|-----|
| None (0) = BL | 20 |
| Light (1) = 2 × BL | 40 |
| Medium (2) = 3 × BL | 60 |
| Heavy (3) = 6 × BL | 120 |
| X-Heavy (4) = 10 × BL | 200 |

ACTIVE DEFENCES

| | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Dodge | Parry | Block |
| 8 | 8 | - |
| | (Unarmed) | |

| REACTION MODIFIERS |
|---------------------|
| Appearance + _____ |
| Status - _____ |
| Reputation _____ |
| |
| |

| ADVANTAGES & PERKS | |
|--|-------|
| Acute Vision +1 | [2] |
| Appearance (Attractive) | [4] |
| Fearlessness +1 (bonus to Fright Checks) | [2] |
| High Manual Dexterity +1 | [5] |
| Less Sleep (1 hour less) | [2] |
| Versatile (+1 to any creative tasks) | [5] |
| | [] |
| French (Native) | [0] |
| English (Accented) | [4] |
| | [] |
| | [] |

| SKILLS | |
|--|----------|
| Name | Level |
| Administration | 11 [1] |
| Area Knowledge (Paris) | 12 [1] |
| Artist (Drawing) | 12 [2] |
| Carousing | 11 [1] |
| Carousing | 11 [1] |
| Connoisseur (Visual Arts) | 11 [1] |
| Cooking | 11 [1] |
| Filch | 11 [1] |
| Forgery | 11 [2] |
| Lockpicking | 12 [1] |
| Observation | 13 [1] |
| Guns (Shotgun) | 11 [1] |
| Merchant | 11 [2] |
| Riding (Equines) | 11 [1] |
| Savoir-Faire (Servant) | 12 [2] |
| Scrounging | 14 [1] |
| Sewing (includes Manual Dexterity bonus) | 12 [1] |
| Shadowing | 10 [2] |
| Stealth | 11 [2] |
| Streetwise | 10 [1] |
| | [] |
| | [] |
| | [] |
| | [] |

| DISADVANTAGES & QUIRKS | |
|--|---------|
| Duty (M. Theophile Moreau) | [-10] |
| Shyness (Mild) | [-5] |
| Skinny (only 6 points of damage knocks you back) | [-5] |
| Status -1 (Servant) | [-5] |
| Wealth (Struggling) | [-5] |
| | [] |
| | [] |
| | [] |
| Dry wit | [-1] |
| Practices different handwriting - in secret! | [-1] |
| Trusts too quickly when someone shows her kindness | [-1] |
| Draws places from memory | [-1] |
| Eats far too fast | [-1] |
| | [] |

Mme. Serafine

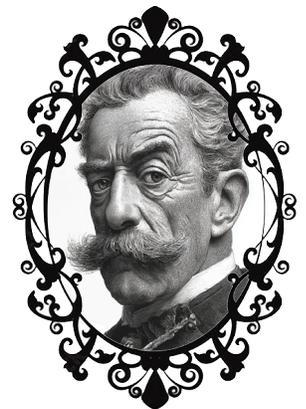
Aristocratic Savant



Per 13 • Status 3

Capt. Duvallon

Iron-eyed Veteran

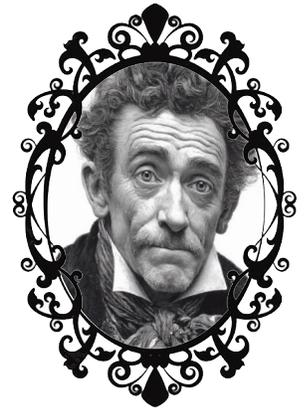


Per 12 • Status 1

Gigot

Washed-up Libertine

Per 12 • Status -1



Mlle. Faure

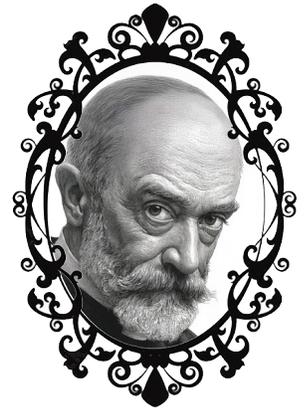
Maid with a Luminous Mind

Per 14 • Status -1



Father Roux

Scholarly Priest



Per 12 • Status 0

Mme. Merchand

Determined Activist



Per 12 • Status 1