



An Enemies Sourcebook for

**DARK CHAMPIONS**  
HEROES OF VENGEANCE

#429

OR

**CHAMPIONS**  
THE ROLE-PLAYING GAME

# CREATURES of the NIGHT

## H O R R O R E N E M I E S



**By Dean Shomshak**



# Creatures of the Night™

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# INTRODUCTION

## AUTHOR'S NOTES

Why horror?

That's a valid question. The answer, I think, comes in three parts.

First, of course, it's an excuse for another *Enemies* book. Aside from helping the nice people at ICE pay their bills, it's always good to see what sort of villains other people are making. We all have blind spots, and *Enemies* books give GMs a chance to see what they haven't thought of yet.

More seriously, horror presents unusual challenges for GMs and players alike. GMs face the challenge of bringing fear into a genre where the protagonists are pretty much immune to normal harm. Players face the challenge of perils that perhaps cannot be defeated by a simple brawl—but which are so evil they must be defeated. Aside from testing heroes in unusual ways, horror stories make the heroes shine that much brighter because their foes are that much darker.

And finally, horror stories are fun! It's a weird sort of fun, I admit, but no weirder than RPGs in general. If you're one of those people who knows how fun it is to be scared and would like to know why, I recommend Stephen King's *Danse Macabre*; nobody knows more about the subject than he does.

So for those of you who like adding a little extra fear to your *CHAMPIONS* campaign, here is *Creatures of the Night*. It can hardly be an exhaustive or definitive guide to superhero horror adventures, but I have tried to fill it with suitably scary villains and suggestions on how to use them. Some operate in tightly-knit groups; others are loners who may only operate with other villains on an ad hoc basis, or not at all. Some are supernatural—demons, sorcerers, slimy unspeakables and so on—while others are more “natural” mutants, mad scientists and victims of bizarre accidents. Here are familiar monsters such as vampires and werewolves, as well as enigmatic beings whose origins, powers and motives are only understood through repeated clashes and careful investigation.

Some readers may find some of these villains disturbing or even offensive. In fact, I hope so. By definition, horror deals with things we'd normally rather not face. No magical, religious or political advocacy is intended. Yes, I have opinions, and they unavoidably color what I write, (see, for instance, the concluding essays on Satanism and serial killers), and I'm not ashamed of them—but I'm not out to convince anyone of anything. I use demons, evil doctors and Third World dictators, for instance, because they are scary, not because I have any axes to grind about religion, medicine or international politics.

Welcome to my nightmares.

## HORROR IN OTHER HERO PRODUCTS

Several of the villains presented elsewhere are suitable for horror. From *Classic Enemies*, Black Paladin and Dark Seraph are linked to Satanic forces, and the Slug to Lovecraftian horror. The Monster and Leech are properly fearsome monsters. And of course, what mad scientist would be better to probe Things Man Was Not Meant to Know than Dr. Destroyer? *Alien Enemies* provides the Spores from Space, the Tyrixx Horde and the Masq, some classic B-Movie monsters from space, and the quasi-Lovecraftian Arcane. Horror World, in *Champions in 3-D*, however, delivers Lovecraftian nameless horrors from beyond in the purest form yet seen in a Hero System product.

Note that one may re-interpret villains not originally meant to be horrific. Take, for instance, everyone's favorite joke villain, Foxbat. He's crazy; he could do anything, without warning. And because he thinks he's in a comic book, where nobody really dies except for unimportant bit-part characters, he won't feel the slightest guilt, no matter how atrocious his actions. “What are you so upset about? It's just a story!”

And of course, heroes might discover that Foxbat is right.

## THE THREE FACES OF HORROR

Horror has three basic aspects. Villains for horror adventures can be scary in any of these three ways, and usually more than one.

Most obviously, villains can be physically scary. This is the basic Hollywood B-movie sort of horror, with ugly monsters and rotting corpses and slime and gore everywhere. It ain't high art, but don't knock it: it works. Even the most well-bred English ghost stories went for the shocker now and then.

Another sort of horror comes from what people do, and why they do it. Some things, whether as ethereal as demon-summoning or as sordidly mundane as rape and murder, just aren't done by reasonable people in a reasonable world. Even most supervillains have motives one can understand, even if they're not nice. After all, who wouldn't like to be rich, or powerful, or to get back at people who have wronged them? When deeds or motives become too strange or extreme, however, they become frightening.

And what about when the whole world stops being reasonable? We all think we have some idea how the world works. Even in comic books, where the laws of science are a joke, characters can still usually count on the Universe seeming to

make sense. If circumstances undercut our sense of reality's ground-rules—then what? “The oldest and strongest fear,” as the classic horror writer H. P. Lovecraft put it, “is fear of the unknown.”

## HORROR IN OTHER GENRES

### MYSTIC MASTERS

Horror and comic-book sorcerous adventure co-exist uneasily. Classic Black Magic Horrors like demons and vampires have often appeared as foes of comicbook sorcerers like Dr. Strange and Dr. Fate. Until recently, however, magic-oriented titles were better at delivering four-color thrills than serious horror. Nowadays, publishers are not so restricted, and several fine titles mix horror with heroism in varying proportions.

In more “straight” horror, magic and the supernatural have a different style from four-color sorcery. The villains are more grotesque in appearance and action. Magic is more traditional: instead of wiggling their fingers, calling on the Seven Spheres of Selestar and creating a magical force-blast, sorcerers draw magic circles in their own blood. The demons are more clearly inspired by the lore of ceremonial magic. There is as much emphasis on the evil within the human heart as on supernatural menace.

All the magic-oriented villains and monsters in *Creatures of the Night* can be used in *Mystic Masters* adventures with few, if any, changes.

### DARK CHAMPIONS

Horror easily fits into the mean streets of *Dark Champions*. The gritty world of street vigilantes already has classic horror elements of sudden death, monstrous appetites, suspicion and betrayal. Indeed, real urban horrors can put imagined grotesqueries to shame.

Case in point: In March of 1992, Colombian police discovered a medical murder ring operating out of Free University in Baranquilla. University guards lured in homeless garbage-pickers, shot them and sold the cadavers to the medical school. For months, the city's garbage-pickers petitioned the police to investigate the disappearance of their fellows, but the Colombian police cared little what happened to such poor people. At last the murderous guards slipped up: a garbage-picker left for dead in the morgue escaped and staggered, still bleeding, to a nearby police station. The ensuing investigation implicated several Free University staff members and faculty as well as the guards who did the actual killings. Free University closed its doors, perhaps forever.

The Free University case shows that one doesn't need supervillains, black magic or mad scientists to build stark horror. Indeed, adding a Frankenstein-like mad doctor or a Satanic cult would practically be a relief. The more fabulous elements of horror, however, best fit into a street-level campaign if they are firmly tied to familiar, human evils.

Several *Creatures of the Night* villains fit neatly into *Dark Champions* adventures. The Mind-Master Complex presents mind control mystery and paranoia, although its raw power should be considerably reduced for a street-level

campaign. Its power to “possess” people is quite formidable enough! The Great Beast might kidnap poor people to experiment upon. Black Fang combines an unusual serial killer with legal and political intrigue (the hugger-mugger with Demonologist can be changed). Dr. Black was originally conceived as a street-level villain with thug lackeys. Hell Rider's six targets for vengeance might be corrupt people whose wealth and status puts them “above the law.” Indeed, one could adapt Hell Rider into a vigilante hero! Caiman and the Homunculus are assassins; so, in a weirder way, are Fearmonger and Whisper. Lady Twilight feeds off the prosperity of the city just as she feeds off the blood of its people—and she's not necessarily the only vampire to find a niche in organized crime. Lovecraftian horrors do not belong on the mean streets, but the occasional demon, gargoyle or other, more familiar monster could be an interesting change of pace. Just remember that in street-level adventures the focus should stay on the internal evil of human motivations.

The lower power level of *Dark Champions* means that GMs might want to reduce the power and defenses of some monsters and villains. Detective work to uncover motivations and weaknesses becomes even more important than in a four-color campaign. “Achilles Heels” (see “How to Fight the Unbeatable Foe”) and indirect attack become vital. The Pulverizer's high-caliber bullets just bounce off the demon's hide—but what about the sorcerer cowering behind the bloodstained altar, or the glowing jeweled eyes of the loathsome idol?

### FANTASY HERO

Horror fits easily into fantasy campaigns as well. What's a brawny swordsman without an undead horror to battle in its tomb, or an evil sorcerer summoning grotesque minions? Shelob and the Black Riders, in *Lord Of The Rings*, provided moments of chilling terror in the definitive fantasy epic. Even “funny fantasy” isn't immune: the betentacled denizens of the Dungeon Dimensions ooze their way into Terry Pratchett's *Diskworld* novels. And as mentioned, modern-day “urban fantasy” slides quite naturally into horror.

In the standard, quasi-Medieval setting of most fantasy campaigns, horror tends to be simple and visceral rather than subtle and spiritual. The emphasis is clearly on “external” evil—monsters, evil sorcerers and the like. Demons want to eat your face, not corrupt your society. (Not that “internal” evils of greed, brutality and obsession are absent from fantasy worlds. Quite the opposite: they're often so universal that they've lost any shock value.)

A few *Creatures of the Night* villains could transfer to heroic fantasy adventures. Most of the Devil's Advocates could be adapted as evil sorcerers for a *Fantasy Hero* campaign; with major reduction in power, Archimago becomes a splendid lich. The Great Beast could produce monsters by alchemy instead of science. Hell Rider could be a fearsome Dark Knight guarding a temple of evil. Monsters of the Elder Gods are too weird and powerful for regular use, but they could be an apocalyptic horror whose summoning must be averted at all cost.

The demons can be used without the slightest alteration. Lesser demons give a heroic-level swordsman a good workout without being invincible. Greater demons and lesser demon lords can challenge whole groups of adventurers. Greater demon lords should only be used against powerful, experienced groups, or in cases where the heroes have other options besides directly fighting the demon lord.

## STAR HERO

"In space, nobody can hear you rip off other genres." Like fantasy, star-spanning science fiction most easily accepts immediate, physical horror. As *Alien* showed, hunting a monster through a big, dark spaceship works just as well as hunting a monster through a big, dark house. For SF the horrors should have scientific (or pseudo-scientific) explanations: no Black Magic Horrors, but plenty of gruesome aliens and mutants. Murderous robots and cyborgs work well too.

Horror Enemies suitable for SF campaigns include the Mind-Master Complex, the Monad, Four Eyes (if one likes mutants), the Great Beast and the Homunculus (made a robot instead of a golem). Killer Appliances, Slime Worms and some other monsters could be interpreted in science fictional ways as well.

## JUSTICE INC.

*Justice Inc.* is a natural for horror. The 1920s and 30s were as much a golden age for horror as for every other kind of pulp fiction. "Psychic detectives" like Jules deGrandin were common, and H. P. Lovecraft and his cronies introduced the world to unspeakable Things from Beyond. The *Call Of Cthulhu* game from Chaosium gives a definitive treatment to such "Lovecraftian" horror.

Supernatural Horror Enemies like the Devil's Advocates, Haunt or Lady Twilight make just as good opponents for pulp-era heroes as for modern superheroes, albeit they must be greatly reduced in power. Mad scientists like the Great Beast were popularized by pulp fiction: Doc Savage fought dozens of criminals armed with super-scientific weapons, while the insidious Fu Manchu is an example of a really high-end criminal scientist, one able to threaten the world.

## OTHER GENRES

Alas, I have no experience with "cyberpunk" adventuring. In most respects, however, the archetypal cyberpunk world is just like the gritty *Dark Champions* world, only with flashier technology.

I have even less knowledge of chopsocky and Westerns, but I suspect that an adventure fusing horror with martial arts action or showdowns at high noon would be a damned strange adventure. And if any reader has done this, I'd like to hear about it. (*Editor's Note: Some of Robert E. Howard's works deal with horror in a Western setting. Check them out; they're fun reads.*)

## HOW TO DO HORROR

But enough philosophizing. You've got a book full of supervillains and monsters, maybe you want to invent a few of your own, and you're wondering how to use them. No problem. As a GM, you do have to work a little harder to give that thrill of fear to players when their characters are tougher than the average tank, but there are a few simple guidelines that make it easier.

First, create villains that work around the average hero's strengths. Unusual attacks such as mental powers, adjustment powers (Drain, Suppress, etc.) NND attacks and Transforms ignore normal defenses. How many heroes have you seen who have bought Power Defense, or Life Support vs. disease? In the same vein, unusual defenses such as Desolid or Damage Reduction keep heroes from casually

trouncing a monster or villain meant to evoke horror. Powers giving exceptional mobility or the ability to strike from surprise give much the same effect. Finally, maybe the heroes can waste the villain with ease—but dare not. The villain may be an innocent person possessed by a demon, or have hostages the heroes cannot yet rescue. Heroes (and their players) won't be so fearless when they find they've got to rely on intelligence more than brute force.

How one presents a villain is even more important, however, than the villain's powers. One basic rule of horror storytelling is not to bring the monster or villain straight to the heroes for a brawl. Instead, they have to hunt it—or maybe it is hunting them, and at first they don't know it! Victory may depend on discovering the monster's weaknesses and plans before it's too late. Be sure, however, to provide plenty of clues and story hooks to lead the heroes to the villain. Not many players are actually good at thinking of lines of investigation: GMs need to make any legwork the heroes must do as easy as possible so they can get on with the plot. In the same spirit, plots should be kept fairly simple, with just one or two lines of investigation. If there are too many clues, that seem at first to lead in different directions, the players will just be confused instead of appreciating how cleverly everything ties up at the end.

Even if a villain doesn't have powers that neutralize the heroes' strengths, it can be pretty scary if it prefers attacking helpless normal people instead of brawling with the heroes. Let a few NPCs get munched. It's what they're for. Every time the monster strikes and the heroes aren't able to stop it, the anxiety level rises. They must stop the fiend...but how?

Atmosphere is one of the most important ingredients of any horror story. Some settings are just scarier than others. "Gothic" settings like isolated mansions and cobwebby crypts are both familiar and effective, but one shouldn't ignore modern anxiety-producing places such as hospitals and slums. Places become scarier when it's dark, and what is hinted at is often more frightening than what is openly shown.

Social settings provide other opportunities for undermining a character's sense of security. Is a hero a whitebread, Middle-America type? Send the investigation into a leather bar. For a hero who's a scientific rationalist, try a remote monastery or a commune of religious fanatics, where furtive people give dark hints but dare not say more. On the other hand, a comfortable, familiar setting can make a horror all the more shocking from contrast: just think of all those stories about small towns with dreadful secrets, from *The Weird Shadow Over Innsmouth* to Salem's Lot. The local beauty salon is run by Satanists! Kindly old Pastor Wiswick at the Rescue Mission kidnaps runaways for his mutation experiments! The Chamber of Commerce is run by brain-eating aliens! You get the idea.

Finally, as mentioned above, horror goes beyond normal villainy in that horror stories deliberately prod our insecurities. Some fears are simple and material: fear of spiders, snakes, savage carnivores and other unpleasant creatures; fear of death, mutilation and pain; fear of the dark. Others are more abstract: fear of loss of control, of betrayal, of insanity, of challenge to one's beliefs; and so on. Horror books and movies provide valuable inspiration, but the best resource a GM has is still his or her own imagination. One of the basic rules of writing and acting is that if you believe it, your audience will believe it too. The better you can identify what gives you the creeps, the better you can give a vicarious thrill of fear to your players.



# CREATURES of the NIGHT™

## H O R R O R E N E M I E S

**C**reatures of the Night is the definitive sourcebook for supernatural foes in *Champions*® as well as *Dark Champions*™. This book is full of nasty enemies who are all rooted in the realm of horror. To gamemaster these villains, *Creatures of the Night* includes extensive sections of how to interject horror into a four-color world. Finally, the heroes will be shaking in their boots as they face the villains from this book!

Over forty highly-detailed villains, each with motivations, tactic and horrific powers are presented within. Some are organized into teams with coordinated strategies and battle plans. The rest are presented the way horror should be: alone, scary and dangerous.

What are the Demonologist's plans, and what does he intend for his Devil's Advocates? Will the heroes be able to stop the star-spanning danger of the mechanical Monad? Can they withstand the terrible vampiric power of Lady Twilight? Are they a match for the awful might of the demon Baphomet? Buy *Creatures of the Night* and find out!

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