

The Best of Friends

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A Ravenloft adventure for 4 to 6 characters levels 1 to 3

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Preparation section

This adventure is designed for 4 to 6 characters ranging from levels 1 to 3. Any classes or races will work, but access to spells involving light (*light*, *continual light*, etc.) will make confronting the villain easier. Players who attack first and ask questions later will have a disadvantage in this adventure, as their adversary will take much more than violence to stop, and the true villain will attempt to misdirect them several times. Finding the truth, therefore, will require some detective work. Barbarians and other less socially adaptable classes will also be at a disadvantage, as the action opens during a formal dinner and involves diplomacy and talk as much as confrontation.

Weather also plays an important role in this adventure. As it opens, a major storm is threatening, one which will break open at midnight. During the days that follow, the DM should roll 1d6 each morning. A roll of 1 or 2 means that the rain pours down in torrents, limiting visibility to 30 ft, while any other roll means that the rain is merely a drizzle, limiting visibility to 120 ft. At night, regardless of the daytime condition, the storm is at full strength, deluging characters caught outside and limiting visibility to almost nothing. Before running the adventure, the DM should familiarize himself with the rules for tracking under such conditions.

Although this adventure is event driven, it is both possible and allowable for the actions of the PC's to disrupt the schedule. The outline of events is laid out below, but the actions of the party may cause any number of changes. As always, the DM should read the entire adventure over thoroughly, especially the "Concluding the Adventure" section, before play so that he or she can handle these as they happen. Should the PC's at any time succeed in destroying Jean, the DM should refer to his description to see how long it will take him to reform. Once that time has elapsed, he arises at midnight, and the plot line continues where it left off. The DM should also familiarize himself with the monster entry for "Valpurgest" (from the *Monstrous Manual*

appendix if running a 2nd Edition game or *Denizens of Dread* if running 3rd Edition).

Adventure Background

For generations, the LeMarcs had been pillars of the community of Chaumont, and maintaining their standing was of greatest importance to the current patriarch, Alphonse. Maintaining the image was not easy, in light of the fact that his family's money was nearly spent through various bad investments. Were that not enough, he was forced to deal with the possibility that his daughter Marie was mentally unbalanced, although hushing that up was easily done. As a girl of the upper class, she could be kept in the house most of the time, and chaperoned while walking the property. Once a suitable husband was found for her, Alphonse would be able to pass her on and concentrate on what he considered to be more important matters.

As such, it was not only a shock but also a definite threat to the family's stability to find that Marie was considering marriage to the local schoolmaster Claude. It was true that they had spent some harmless time together, but the man was far, far beneath her socially. In addition, his scholar's pay left him with no money to keep Marie in the manner her upbringing had accustomed her to, and he had no family to draw from. Despite Alphonse's explaining this to her and ordering her to consider her duty to family and father, Marie refused to see reason, and the patriarch was determined to destroy the relationship.

His plan was simple; he would make it appear that the schoolmaster was preparing to marry someone else, and his heartbroken daughter would leave this passing fancy and return her attentions to men of the appropriate level of society. Alphonse carefully planted the seeds of doubt in his daughter's already unstable mind, and then presented his "evidence" to her. Heartbroken, as he had hoped, she fled to the garden in tears. Unfortunately, Claude had come by to visit just at that moment, caught sight of her, and followed. Near the garden shed, Marie confronted him with her father's accusations,

and the stunned young man denied them all, swearing that he loved her alone. Unable to accept that either her father or her lover would deliberately lie to her, Marie's fragile mind snapped. Grabbing a nearby hoe, she beat Claude to death.

Of course, neither having his daughter branded a murderer nor having her labeled insane and put away was acceptable to Alphonse. As the family gathered in the sitting room, he attempted to work out a plan to cover up the murder, just as his old friend Jean Mouchet dropped by for a drink. Alphonse saw his chance. Together with his son Phillipe, the patriarch coerced Jean into the garden to provide evidence that he had actually killed the schoolmaster. While Alphonse covered Jean with a pistol, Phillipe tore buttons off the man's coat, even striking him several times to make it seem as if there had been a struggle. Jean was finally forced to hide the body under a rosebush, leaving even more evidence behind. Once that was done, Alphonse turned his hapless friend over to the gendarmes, and washed his hands of the matter.

Jean was hung for the crime, protesting his innocence to the last. Two days later, he returned to wreck vengeance on the family that he had once considered the best of friends . . .

Adventure Summary

Alphonse LeMarc has invited the PC's to dinner and offered to put them up for the night in order that he may do a bit of social climbing. This may be because of whatever reason the DM wishes, desirably as a result of the PC's latest adventure. They should get the idea that while Alphonse is genuinely attempting to honor them, he is actually aiming for the bragging rights of having such "famous" people in his house. The PC's should be encouraged to go along, as it seems to be a harmless way of gaining a possible patron.

Jean arises at midnight on the first evening the PC's spend at LeMarc Chateau. His revenge will take five nights, as he plans to kill the LeMarcs one at a time, saving Alphonse for last. If uninterrupted, his plan is as outlined below. If

Jean is prevented, for whatever reason (i.e. being destroyed or driven off), from killing his target on a particular night, then he will return to his hiding place and attack the same target the following night. If the PC's are able to track him, this may lead to an ending if the adventure before all five nights have passed. The DM should review the "Concluding the Adventure" section for this possibility.

The First Night

Jean's activities – Jean awakens at midnight and reaches the house by early morning. His plans are not fully formed yet, and all he does is peer into each window, and then makes his way to the garden shed for the day.

Alphonse's reaction – Upon hearing of the strange silhouette, he refuses to believe it, as he is preoccupied with Marie's madness. He asks the PC's if they will investigate this occurrence.

Marie's reaction – She sees Jean crossing the garden, and thinks Claude has returned. Throughout the day, she giggles and croons softly.

Phillipe's reaction – He sees a flash of Jean's face in the window, and is terrified over his part in the framing. He does not, however, wish to go to the gallows, and as such refuses to tell anything.

Marguerite's reaction – She takes the silhouette as an omen, and wants to tell the story. Alphonse prevents her, claiming that Marie's distress has burdened his wife's mind.

The Second Night

Jean's activities – At midnight, Jean makes his way to the house and breaks in. While the break in is investigated, he kills Marguerite in her room, and hides in the cellar or the attic, depending on the PC's actions. As Jean leaves the room, he meets Phillipe and warns the boy that he will be next.

Alphonse's reaction – He is overcome with grief over Marguerite's death, and terror over Jean's return. He and Phillippe get into an argument, as the terrified Phillippe wishes to reveal the truth. Alphonse tells the PC's a garbled version of the truth, and begs them to put Jean to rest.

Marie's reaction – Unable to accept her mother's death, she withdraws further. When spoken to, she sings nonsense songs about Claude and her mother.

Phillippe's reaction – Despite his father's warnings, he blurts out parts of the story throughout the day. He is terrified at the fact that Jean seems to still be in the house, and will hide in the kitchen as night falls.

The Third Night

Jean's activities – Again at midnight, he makes his way through the house to find and kill Phillippe in the kitchen. Afterward, he speaks briefly to Marie, realizing that she is too mad to give him away, and again hides in the attic or cellar.

Alphonse's reaction – He is terrified, but still hides the truth in the hopes that the PC's will destroy Jean before it is too late. As night falls, he orders them to succeed or he will use every means at his disposal to make their lives miserable.

Marie's reaction – She is ecstatic all day, as "Claude" has promised that he will return for her the next night.

The Fourth Night

Jean's Activities – Around midnight, he goes to Marie's room. If she is unguarded, he kills her. If she has company, he appears at the window to try and lure them into the garden. Marie will do everything in her power to follow him, and will be killed by him if she does. If she is prevented, Jean will return to the house and attack whoever is guarding her. Once she is dead, he returns to the garden shed.

Alphonse's reaction – He is terrified beyond reason, and blames the PC's for the death of his family. Ordering them to leave his land immediately, he barricades himself in his room to await Jean's coming.

The Fifth Night

Jean's activities – He breaks into the house for the final time and attacks whoever is between him and Alphonse. Once Alphonse is dead, he returns to his grave.

The adventure starts...

Night is falling as you approach the gates of the LeMarc estate. The storm that has threatened all day seems about to break any moment, and the sky is lit every so often by the occasional flash of lightning. Thunder booms sullenly, and the clouds grow thicker and blacker while you travel. A tiny shiver of apprehension runs down your spine at the forbidding weather.

Your host, Alphonse LeMarc, meets you at the gate and bids you welcome. Though he is obviously a snob, you cannot help but be amused at the way he detains you outside so that a passing merchant from town can see that you are his guests. Finally, as rain begins to sprinkle down, he escorts you inside.

The characters have an hour to freshen up before dinner. During this time, the sunroom and library are made available as guest bedrooms, and those who finish early are invited to wait in the sitting room. Alphonse makes light conversation, and once all are assembled, Phillipe announces that dinner is served. As soon as she is introduced, Marguerite excuses herself to tend to Marie. As they move about the house, the PC's should subtly notice the lack of things a wealthy, upper-class family would have. For instance, none of the rooms have rugs on the floor, merely bare, varnished board, yet there are many light spots that indicate rugs were once laid there. Also, the furnishing mentioned in the description of the house are all that remain, and the empty table and bare corners should suggest to the PC's that the family once owned many more possessions.

The conversation over dinner is everything you expected, as your host punctuates the tales of your exploits with comparisons to the history and grandeur of his family. Several times he brings to your attention the quality of the food he has provided, and the value of the furnishings and artifacts in his home. Although you are more

than willing to agree that the meal is far richer than you are used to, you cannot help but notice the relative cheapness of the tableware, or the fact that Alphonse brings it in and serves it himself. That fact by itself is not momentous, considering that the house is not quite large enough to require servants. On the other hand, the furnishings and decorations that your host seems so proud of are somewhat gaudy and tasteless, almost as if they were bought because they were expensive, rather than for aesthetic purposes.

If the PC's have been in town for some time, the conversation should eventually turn to the recent execution. Alphonse shows a great deal of sadness over the event, and the PC's should get the idea that he is genuine in his feelings. If they ask, he will admit that the murder for which Jean was hung was committed in his garden, and will show voyeuristic PC's the area if they insist. Under no circumstances will he discuss particulars, claiming that the shock is too recent. As everyone returns, read the following:

As your group returns to the house, you notice a light burning in an upstairs window. Silhouetted in the window is a young girl, who gazes out at you without interest. As you draw nearer, she seems to sigh, and shifts her gaze to the horizon. Behind her is Madame LeMarc, who, seeing you, quickly draws the shades and hides the girl.

"My daughter, Marie," explains Alphonse quietly. "She is . . . not well."

Once back inside the house, or once the dinner is concluded if the PC's did not go to the garden, Alphonse will bid his guests a goodnight, and show them to their rooms. Regardless of what the PC's do, he will stay awake for another hour, going over papers, and will then retire. He invites the PC's to the run of the house for the night, and will only ask that they avoid the family bedrooms. Within an hour of all being settled, the storm breaks out in full fury.

The First Night

The Awake Character

One PC should be kept awake to see Jean's appearance. If for some reason they post a guard, or one stays awake to study, or for any other reason one willingly stays awake, the following text should be modified for the situation. If all PC's go to bed, the DM should choose one and privately give him or her the following (the book read might be used to pass on some clues about the current campaign if the DM wishes):

Sleep refuses to take you, and when your constant fidgeting finally results in the others throwing pillows at you, you give up. Easing out of the room, you leave your comrades to sleep in peace, and head for the sitting room in the hopes that a bit more brandy might settle you. The storm's fury continues unabated, and illuminates your way with the occasional flash of lightning.

On reaching your destination, you find not only more brandy, but also one of a series of books dealing with the history of the area. With a decanter handy, you make yourself comfortable in a stuffed chair, relax, and lose yourself in the deeds of long ago.

A particularly loud rumble of thunder causes you to glance out toward the verandah. There, in the yard, lit for the briefest of seconds, you see the silhouette of a figure. You start from your chair, only to have the next strike illuminate the shape again. Although it appears human, you can make out no details, except that it seems to be holding its head in its hands.

You rush to the door and peer out into the darkness to see only an empty yard.

Although the PC will probably rouse the rest of the party, hopefully they will be polite enough to avoid waking the family. Should they do so, Alphonse comes downstairs dressed in a robe. He will listen politely, but will acidly inform his

guests that it can probably wait until morning. With that, he will ask them to stay quiet for the remainder of the night in order not to disturb Marie, and will return to his room.

Should the PC's decide to investigate, the storm prevents any tracking and limits visibility to nothing. Those who wander around outside will be soaked to the skin immediately, and no trace of the figure will be found anywhere. Depending on character history, the sight of an unknown shape may be cause for a Fear check.

Speaking with Alphonse the next morning

The next morning, Alphonse will demand an explanation for the previous night if he was awakened. If not, the PC's will probably tell him of the appearance. If they do not, the DM might suggest that their host would be grateful to them should there be a problem or spirit that they can lay to rest. Regardless of how the adventure is continued, read the following:

Alphonse is skeptical when you tell the story of the night's activities, and seems somewhat distracted. As you finish, Phillipe enters the room.

"Father, she . . ." On noticing you, the young man stops suddenly, and embarrassment flashes across his face, "I'm sorry father, I thought you were alone."

"Quite all right, Phillipe," Alphonse reassures his son, "We were just finishing here." He turns back to you, "As you can see, I am rather busy for fanciful tales. If you insist that you saw something, feel free to investigate, but I must ask that you keep your distance from my daughter's room. She is somewhat ill at the moment, and I will not tolerate her being frightened by ghost stories."

Considering that a dismissal, he turns and leaves with his son.

The PC's may take whatever course of action they deem necessary, but the storm will have wiped out all traces that might have existed. In addition, the rain continues to pour down, hampering their work, and dampening their spirits.

Should the PC's decide not to investigate, they will probably leave as planned, with Alphonse walking them to the gate, and politely asking them to return soon. If they remain in town, Phillipe will seek them out the next day with news of his mother's death and plead with them to come back and face the menace. If they leave town, the adventure will end and they will hear of the deaths of the LeMarcs later on.

Speaking with Phillipe

Phillipe will spend the day helping his father with financial matters, and running errands in town. If the PC's are able ask him about the previous night, read the following:

The young man is obviously shaken by *something*, and he continually darts glances out into the garden. To you inquiries, however, he replies, "Last night? No, I didn't see anything outside last night. It was raining awfully hard, you know, I don't think I could have seen anything even if anything was there."

If a *detect lie* or similar spell is cast on him, it will reveal that Phillipe is lying. If *ESP* or something similar is used, it will reveal that Phillipe is beyond shaken, he is in fact terrified, and the source of his terror is a person. Should he be confronted about his story, he will give every show of offense, and demand that the PC's continue about their business, if they have any. Later in the day Alphonse will catch them alone and inform them that his son has always been trustworthy, and remind them that they are only investigating this "figure" as long as he wishes them to. Should their actions or words insult Alphonse, he will ask them to leave, and Phillipe will seek them out the next day.

Marie's reactions

Should the PC's manage to get close to Marie's room, they hear her giggling and crooning softly. If they approach beneath her window, they will see her showing a bit more animation than the previous day. On spying them, she will lean out and eagerly examine their faces. After a few moments, however, she will frown, shake her head, and withdraw back into the room. If at any time the PC's attempt to get close enough to speak with her, either Alphonse or Phillipe will arrive and ask them to leave her in peace. Should this take place after they have offended Phillipe, Alphonse will likely ask them to leave immediately.

Marguerite's revelations

The PC's will likely encounter Marguerite around meal times, as she spends most of the day taking care of her daughter. If confronted, read the following:

The lady fixes you with a brooding glance. "Yes," she replies, "I saw the visitation. I shall enter a trance this afternoon to attempt to communicate with the spirit, but it is obvious what its presence foretells. A curse hangs on this house and all that stay here. I suggest you save yourselves before it is too late."

Just then, Alphonse enters the room. "Marie is waiting, dear," he says. With a last grim look at you, she sweeps from the room. Alphonse waits until she is out of earshot, and then turns to you.

"My wife . . . let us say that she dabbles in things, spiritualism and other such nonsense. I wouldn't take her words too seriously, it seems that every week she has seen another "omen" of terrible things."

Should the PC's ask, Marguerite will be happy to allow them to sit in for her trance, but it will be obvious within minutes that the lady has no idea what she is doing. If the PC's stay, after about an hour she will "awaken" and inform

them that the spirit is unreachable for now. Alphonse will use this as an example of what he meant, and urge them to take no notice to what she says.

Other than the above, the PC's may spend the day combing the garden to see if they can find footprints. If they think to examine the rosebush Claude was hidden under, they can discover a partial footprint with an Int check at -2 or DC 10. The only structure close to the bush is the garden shed, and if they are able to find Jean inside, the DM should consult the "Confronting Jean" section (immediately following the "Combat" section in his statistics).

The Second Night

The Break-in

If the PC's have left the house for some reason and are not present for the second night, skip this section and have Phillipe find them in town the next day. If the PC's have remained, it is most likely that they will have posted guard to see if the shape reappears. As mentioned above, Jean will not approach the house until just after midnight, and the following should be read to whoever holds that watch:

You prowl through the darkened rooms, eyes searching the yard outside. The storm has again unleashed its fury at sunset, and you can barely make out what lies a just few feet beyond the windows. The occasional flashes of lightning temporarily blind you, making it that much more difficult to tell if anything approaches. It is frustrating work, and all you can think of is returning to bed and sleep. Nevertheless, a sudden shiver hits you at the surety that *something* will happen tonight.

As the night draws on, you find yourself standing at the window of the drawing room, peering out into the gloom. Suddenly, a boom resounds through the house, followed by the crashing of glass, as if one of the doors had just been burst in.

Jean has just smashed his way through the door to the back of the house and is making his way upstairs. No matter what action the PC takes, when he or she reaches the scene Jean has already disappeared. If the player takes the time to wake his or her comrades, they can meet Alphonse as he comes downstairs. Otherwise, he arrives a few minutes after they do.

You reach the end of the hall to see the back door nearly off of its hinges. Whatever happened, it broke the glass in the door and in the window next to it, and splintered the door in several places. As the wind and rain blow in, a chill runs through you to see a trail of muddy footprints tracked across the threshold and down the hallway, fading out after only a few feet.

Behind you Alphonse bustles down the stairs, wrapping his robe around his frame. "What in god's name are you doing?" he bellows.

Alphonse's grief

Alphonse will listen to the account of what happened, but will initially want to believe that the PC's are somehow responsible. As he and the players argue, they are interrupted by a piercing scream from upstairs. If they investigate they find the following scene.

The door to the master bedroom has been ripped out of its frame, and a pasty-faced Phillipe cowers against the opposite wall. Inside, everything lies strewn about, and on the bed is the body of Marguerite, her throat bruised and her head tilted at an unnatural angle. With a hoarse and unbelieving cry, Alphonse throws himself forward and gathers the body into his arms. As you move outside to give him a moment of privacy, his voice follows you.

"Phillipe!" he cries, "How . . . what happened?"

The young man swallows nervously. "Father," he replies, "It was him . . . he's come back!" He

rallies, “Father, you must tell them! They might be able to . . .”

Within seconds Alphonse stands before his son. “Not another word!” he orders.

“But Father . . .” Phillipe replies, only to be interrupted by his father’s hand cuffing him across the face.

“SILENCE!” the older man roars. Regaining his composure, he turns to you and continues, “Please return downstairs to the sitting room, my friends. I will join you momentarily.”

As you make your way into the room and pour drinks, you hear from upstairs the raised voices of the two, engaged in heated argument.

If the PC’s choose to investigate immediately, they have a chance (Int –4 or DC 15) to spot scattered splinters along the floor at the base of the stairs. If they search further in the other rooms, they find more near the door to the cellar. If they continue, they may very well confront Jean now. Otherwise, they should retire to the sitting room to await Alphonse.

After some time the voices fade and Alphonse joins them. Pouring himself a drink, he settles heavily into a chair and begins:

“Please accept my apologies for what just happened. I am afraid that I let my temper get the better of me, and . . .” his voice breaks and he turns to gaze out the window.

“My son is correct. You deserve to know the entire story if I am to ask for your help. The . . . person my son mentioned was named Jean Mouchet. He was an old friend of mine and was often a visitor here. I did not know it at the time, but he was attracted to Marie,” he pauses, “Let us be frank. He desired her obsessively. I heard later that he swore to have her, and be damned any who stood in his way.” Alphonse’s voice breaks, and he pauses again to clear his

throat. Regaining his composure, he turns back to you.

“Marie had begun to court with Claude, the local schoolmaster, and the two were beginning to fall very much in love. Jean was furious. As I am being open and honest with you, you should know that I owe money to a great many people. Jean came here and threatened us with our debts if we did not give him my daughter. I have my pride, gentlemen, and I refused. Unluckily, Claude came by just then to call on Marie, and Jean met him in the garden. Before we could stop him, he had beaten the poor young man to death.”

“What could I do? Marie was devastated, and Phillipe and I were barely able to keep Jean under control until the authorities arrived. There was no question of his guilt, and as you may know, two days ago he was hung. I fear, however, that death has not stopped him.”

Alphonse fixes you with a serious look. “From what Phillipe tells me, I have no choice but to believe that Jean has returned to take Marie. In her melancholy, she seems to believe that he is Claude, and may go with him if he calls. He is still here; I can feel it. I beg you, find him and release us from this curse!”

The PC’s will likely spend the rest of the day searching the house and/or repairing the ruined doors. Should they discover Jean’s hiding place, the DM should consult the “Confronting Jean” section. If they have faced him before, he will consider them enemies. If they do not discover him, he will act as detailed above. If he is destroyed at this time and the PC’s leave, they will receive a message later from Alphonse telling them of Phillipe’s death and begging for their return.

Phillipe’s Terror

Phillipe will avoid the PC’s as much as possible over the course of the day, joining them only at dinner. During the meal he will not look at or respond to any of them, concentrating his

attention on his father, but observant PC's will notice that he has been drinking all day. After the meal he will barricade himself in the kitchen with a decanter of brandy and several knives within easy reach. If the PC's are ever able to corner him and talk, or if they catch him in the kitchen after dinner, read the following:

The young man swallows his brandy nervously, and you can tell from his unsteadiness that he has had far more than is good for him. He fixes you with a glare.

"He's coming for me tonight, you know. He told me so when he killed Mother . . . I wasn't really involved . . . I just . . . just helped. It's not fair, I tell you, I just helped, Father . . ." he buries his face in his hands and sobs.

Once he has composed himself a bit, he continues. "It was all Father's idea. I wanted to tell someone . . . I wanted to tell you last night! I was afraid . . . I . . . I didn't want to face Father..."

If they catch him after dinner, Phillipe will beg for someone to stay with him and wait for Jean. If no one offers, the DM may wish to assign a Powers check the next morning.

Marie's madness

Alphonse will spend the day with Marie, will prevent anyone from speaking with her, and will take food to her shortly before joining everyone else at dinner. After dinner he will prepare her for bed and then leave her, asking the PC's to leave her alone. If the PC's are able to approach her during the day when Alphonse is busy elsewhere they will see that she seems to be even further withdrawn, not responding to anything they do. At the same time, her eyes are brighter and her face more lively and she will perk several times as if listening for someone's approach. No matter how long the PC's stay, or what they do, she shows no sign of even noticing them until they begin to leave:

Marie suddenly looks up and fixes you with her fever-bright stare. With a small, lost smile she speaks, "Mama and Claude are together now . . . She's getting ready for my wedding." Her eyes wander away from yours and her former demeanor returns. You will get nothing further from her.

The Third Night

The Death of Phillipe

Hopefully the PC's will have placed a guard with Phillipe. If there is only one person with him, or if he is alone, Jean will attack. It is assumed, however, that most if not all of the PC's will remain awake to try and intercept Jean's attack. If there is more than one with Phillipe, or if there are more guards than he can successfully evade, he will return to the cellar and make another attempt the next night. As such, the DM should whichever of the following boxes is appropriate, modifying them as necessary.

If Phillipe is alone:

As the night grows old, you suddenly whirl about at the sound of a man's scream, a scream of absolute primal fear. Following it is an inarticulate roaring and the sound of crashing and banging, all coming from the kitchen. In the sudden silence that follows you rush to the room to find Phillipe's bloody form draped over the table, five carving knives jutting from his back. Blood is spattered over everything, even dripping from the ceiling. As you turn away from the grisly scene, your eyes fix on the threshold and floor of the hall. There, marked in Phillipe's blood, are footprints resembling those you saw last night [the night Marguerite was slain]. Your eyes follow them to the base of the stairs before they fade out.

This sight is cause for a Horror check.

If Phillippe has a guard:

The night grows old, and both of you feel yourselves being drawn to sleep. The young man has repeatedly sampled from the brandy, and as a result has grown more and more incoherent as the night draws on. Resting your head on your arms, you allow yourself to slip into a doze, attempting to catch a bit of sleep before your watch is up.

Suddenly you snap awake to the sound of the kitchen door being slammed open. There, framed in the doorway, is what you can only assume is the Jean you were told about. His body is draped in rags, and his skin has the pallor of one who has been dead for several days. As you look, a shudder runs down your body to see one hand pushing the door open, and the other supporting his head; the broken and twisted ruin of his neck is clearly unable to do so. With a harsh growl, he charges.

The sight of Jean is cause for a Fear check at -2 or a Horror check at -2 if the character failed a Fear check involving Jean before. If the guard raises an alarm it will take 1d4 rounds for the rest of the party to arrive. During that time, Jean will concentrate his attacks on Phillippe, but will attack the guard in order to reach his target. Once he has knocked the PC out of the way, he will focus on Phillippe, and will use the knives on the table. Phillippe should be considered to have an armor class of 10, and if Jean makes three successful attacks, Phillippe will slump to the floor dying. Unless he receives magical healing within one round he will die. Once the third attack lands, Jean will toss him aside and focus on the PC's until he is destroyed. If this is the first time they have faced him, he considers them to be enemies from this point on.

A Father's heartbreak

As soon as Alphonse is made aware of Phillippe's death he breaks down. Through his tears he will direct the PC's remove Phillippe's body to the boy's bedroom and close up the kitchen. He will

spend the rest of the day alternating between Marie and Phillippe's body, and if Jean was not destroyed, he will inform the PC's that the least they can do after the previous night's fiasco is to do something about the nemesis. If the PC's balk, possibly considering the challenge to be beyond their power, Alphonse will bluster and threaten, promising to blame the deaths of his family on them and ruin any reputation they might possibly have. This, or the PC's willing cooperation, will probably lead to another search of the house with Jean being found in the attic. The resulting battle should end in Jean's destruction. Once Jean is destroyed, he will thank them, but will ask them to leave immediately so that he can mourn his family. If they leave, they will hear several days later of a fire that destroys the LeMarc chateau, killing all inside. If Jean is not found, Alphonse will demand that all the PC's stand guard over the stairs to ensure that Marie is not taken.

The joy of Marie

If at any time during the day the PC's approach Marie she will be lively and overjoyed, dashing about her room trying on various clothes. She will not, however, respond to either her father or the PC's unless they mention Claude. Once that happens, read the following:

Marie whirls to face you, her eyes sparkling with more life than you have ever seen in them before. "Yes!" she cries, "He's coming for me tonight! He promised that I would get to go with Mama and Phillippe, and that we would all wait together for Papa!" She dances away across the room, then spins to face you again. "Claude is so thoughtful, he said he wanted Papa to feel just like he does!"

The Fourth Night

The death of Marie

If Jean has not yet been destroyed, the PC's should be able to realize that Marie will be his next target. They should have also begun to suspect Alphonse of not being entirely honest with them, but the old man will vehemently deny that he has played false, as he still hopes that Jean will be stopped. The PC's should place a guard with Marie, and will likely also stay in the hallway outside. When Jean begins to make his way downstairs, he will realize that he cannot approach from the hall, and will return to the attic. There he will break a hole in the wall and leap to the ground below. Once outside he will attempt to draw the PC's into the garden. If successful he will double back to the house and attack Marie and those remaining with her.

It is entirely possible that the PC's will get split up at this point, as some may go to investigate the noises in the attic, some may chase Jean into the garden and some may remain with Marie. If Jean was previously destroyed, then he will approach from the outside and there will be no reason for the attic to be investigated. The DM should adjust the following to the needs of the adventure:

Your eyes strain into the darkness outside, watching for any sign of Jean. As dawn approaches, the rain slackens, and you see him standing in the yard, making no attempt to hide. As you watch, he looks up to the window, and beckons with his free hand.

“CLAUDE!” shrieks Marie ecstatically. Before you can stop her, she flings open the door and bolts out.

If the PC's do nothing, Jean stays where he is until she reaches him, and then lets go his head long enough to strangle her to death. If the PC's chase her, they catch up at the front door, and can easily prevent her from leaving the house. Even so, some of the PC's may head out into the

gardens to find Jean, allowing him to attack those with Marie. As with Phillipe, Jean concentrates his attacks on the girl, tossing all others out of the way.

If for some strange reason Marie and the upper story are left unguarded her body will be found the next morning, lying peacefully in her bed with her throat crushed. The window to her room stands open, allowing rain and wind to whip across the floor.

Alphonse's Terror

At this point, Alphonse is not only distraught over the loss of his family but also petrified at the thought that Jean will return for him the next night. Even if Jean was destroyed during the previous night, it is likely that he will have been destroyed at least once before, and Alphonse will hold the PC's responsible for all the deaths:

“Damn you!” screams the patriarch, “You were supposed to end this menace! You were supposed to great ‘heroes!’” He spits the last word at you as if it has a bad taste. Brandishing a heavy candlestick at you he points to the door. “Leave! You have done nothing but fail, and you are to be off of my land within the day!” Backing away, he flies up the stairs, and seconds later you hear the door to the master bedroom slam and lock.

The Fifth Night

Jean's last stand

The PC's can do whatever they need to during the day. Alphonse will stay in his rooms and will not answer to any of the PC's attempts at communication. As nightfall approaches, they will hear his agitated pacing back and forth, and dusk will bring the worst fury the storm has yet shown.

By now the PC's will have every reason to suspect that Alphonse has lied to them. If they abandon him to his fate, they will hear later of a

fire that destroys the house, and the town leaders will contact them regarding a series of murders committed on the constabulary and judiciary (see the “Concluding the Adventure” section for details). On the other hand, they will have also had ample time to find out Jean’s weakness, and may use it to hold the valpurgeist until Alphonse can be subdued and the two brought together. If this happens, or if the PC’s force the truth from Alphonse somehow, see the “Confronting Jean” section for resolution.

Regardless of what the PC’s are planning, Jean breaks through the front door at midnight and attacks any who stand between him and Alphonse. He will not stop until destroyed. Even if Jean falls yet again, Alphonse knows that he will be back and will refuse to leave his rooms. Within a few days he will go mad from fear and hunger and will commit suicide by setting the house afire.

Concluding the Adventure

It is entirely possible that the PC’s may destroy Jean several times over the course of this adventure. The first time, the local gendarmes will come to investigate, and the body will be returned to the cemetery for burial. Alphonse comforts his remaining family while thanking the PC’s and offering them the opportunity to stay at his house as long as they wish. As time passes and Jean continues to return, Alphonse will grow more and more desperate to have him laid to rest, and will use any means at his disposal to force the PC’s to do so. Should the PC’s leave after destroying Jean the first time, Alphonse will send them a letter telling of Jean’s return and begging them for help. If they do not return or leave later they will eventually hear of the demise of the family, and may be asked to investigate a series of brutal murders in the area, as Jean will turn his attention next to the magistrates who sentenced him, and from there to the constabulary. Regardless, when the PC’s return he will immediately remember them for helping Alphonse, and will focus all of his attacks on them.

Should the PC’s succeed in extracting a confession from Alphonse, Jean’s spirit is freed. Alphonse will go to the gallows sobbing hysterically, and will be buried in an unmarked grave. Marie, if she is still alive, will be sent to the nearest asylum for the rest of her life. The family’s fortune will be taken over by Phillipe, if he is still alive, and if not, will be turned over to the town to cover the LeMarc’s debts. The town fathers, recognizing the service done by the PC’s, will reward them with 100 GP each, but will not allow them to take any items from the house, as they are to be auctioned off. Phillipe will not be inclined to reward the PC’s for getting his father executed, but will be grateful for their putting Jean to rest. He will also be willing to sponsor them in their future adventures, in return for a percent of the treasure to cover the family debts. This can be used as a basis for an entire campaign, as Phillipe will wish them to investigate rumors of buried treasure and the like.

If the PC’s succeed in extracting a confession from Alphonse and laying Jean to rest, they will receive a story award of 1500 XP. For every member of the family still alive, a bonus of 200 XP should be added. If the PC’s leave without laying Jean to rest, they receive only 900 XP and no bonuses.

Appendix I: The LeMarc Estate

First Floor

Verandah

The verandah is set off from the outside by a latticework screen, just loose enough to allow vision into the yard. Dark wicker furniture graces the area, including a table for outdoor meals. Several plants sit in the corners, adding to the atmosphere of the room. As with the porch, the furnishings are designed to be hardy but not particularly valuable.

Drawing Room

This is one of the larger rooms of the house, with dark paneling and a large bay window with a short bench running around the base. Away from the window and toward the center of the room is Alphonse's desk (locked), and the rest of the walls are lined with either tables or shelves. There are several sets of books here, including: a four-volume set of local history (i.e. history of the domain the adventure takes place in, worth 100 gp to a historian or collector); a small collection of books on gems (50 gp, but if studied over the course of six months will give the reader the Jeweler proficiency); and a series of short novels (25 gp). The north wall contains a large fireplace, big enough to heat the entire room, with a set of brass implements (15 gp) hanging from the wall next to it.

Porch

As with the verandah, the porch stands open to the air, with two steps leading up from the ground. Ornate columns hold up the two corners away from the house and there are a couple of wicker couches for use in good weather. A path leads around the building from the carriage house, and another cuts away to the front gate and road. Although the furniture is well made, nothing of real value is kept out here.

Front Hall and Staircase

A large staircase with a brass rail curves around to the second floor and dominates the front hall. There is no furniture here, but there are several racks and rows of pegs for holding coats and hats. In the corners stand large baskets and vases for holding walking sticks, umbrellas, and if necessary, swords. The only things of real worth here are several paintings on the walls, depicting country scenes (six paintings, portrait size, worth 100 gp each). One of the vases contains Alphonse and Phillippe's walking sticks (oak with brass handles, 15 gp each).

Carriage House

This open archway has a door leading into the hall and a path leading around to the porch. At each corner are hooks for tying horses to.

Sitting Room

As with the drawing room, the walls are paneled, and hold paintings instead of shelves. The paintings are large, and depict various different subjects, with a family portrait hanging next to the door to the verandah (eight paintings, 4' x 3-4', 150 gp each). A single table against the north wall holds a decanter and set of glasses (150 gp) with the assorted liqueurs and drinks shelved above it (75 gp). The south wall has a fireplace somewhat smaller than the one in the drawing room, and attached at the flue. Couches are drawn up in a rough square at the center of the room, with a small table in the center to rest glasses on.

Dining Room

The walls of this room are painted a light blue, and a long walnut table reaches over half the length of the room. The chairs surrounding the table are of the same wood and design as the table, and three silver candlesticks (75 gp each) provide light after dark. The west wall holds a window embrasure much like the drawing room's, except this window stretches from floor to ceiling, and allowing light all the way to the

other side of the house. Rather than a door, a short partition comes out from each wall, marking the border between dining room and sitting room, making the two into one large area.

Store Room

This is a small, dusty room where Alphonse keeps most of the family's papers and things such as old clothes, broken furniture, etc. In the center of the floor is a hidden trap door (normal chance to find) leading to Alphonse's safe-box. Hidden there are 150 gp, 450 sp, and what remains of the family jewelry: a heavy silver ring set with the LeMarc arms (200 gp); an ornate necklace of pearls and silver (175 gp); two sets of gold earrings with emerald inlays (75 gp each); and set of china tableware with gold filigree (100 gp).

Back Hall and Staircase

This back hallway connects the kitchen with the dining room, and provides a door to the west side of the house and a door to the gallery. The walls are the same shade as the dining room, and the staircase curves up to the second floor, passing above the outside door. The rail is made of brass like the staircase in the front hall. There is nothing of value kept here.

Gallery

This short narrow room extends the length of the kitchen and ends in the cellar stairs. A door allows access into the gardens behind the house, and the exterior wall is mostly glass to allow light. Along the interior wall are several pieces of statuary and a few more paintings (four statues, all too bulky to be easily carried, 50 gp each; five paintings, portrait size, 150 gp each).

Kitchen

A large oven dominates one corner of this room, with counters and cupboards lining the whitewashed walls. The door to the pantry is designed not to latch, allowing people with a load to push through easily. The corner opposite the oven holds is built over an open well, allowing fresh water to be drawn without going

outside. The only things of value are various implements, pots and sets of tableware (25 gp for everything). When Phillipe is killed, the kitchen and pantry will be shut up and not cleaned for several days, until Alphonse has recovered some from his grief.

Pantry

This room is also whitewashed and contains the bulk of the food on-hand, with a small corner built aside for cold storage, and any food item that costs 40 gp or less can be found here. There is a small wine rack built into the south wall currently holding four bottles of wine (25 gp each).

Cellar

This large room is used to store some of the dried foodstuffs, and for other storage needs. Hooks for hanging lanterns are spaced evenly along the walls, and part of the southern end is partitioned off as a wine cellar (34 bottles, 30 gp each; 5 casks, 80 gp each). Although it is not dusty, it is a tiny bit damp, and boxes lie scattered everywhere. If searched, there is a 15% chance of finding some useful household item. When Jean is here, he will hide in the shadows of the southern end, and watch intruders until attacked.

Gardens

The gardens extend for several acres behind and around the chateau, with small paths winding about throughout them. The landscape is further broken by rosebushes, hedges and trees planted in various aesthetic patterns. However, the hedges are short enough and the trees far apart enough so that the entire garden can be seen from any spot. The garden shed is located about fifty feet to the north of the house, and contains all the tools, fertilizer, pots and other items one might expect to find. As always, Jean will ignore those who he does not consider enemies, but anyone opening the door will be able to spot him immediately.

Second Floor

Phillipe's Room

This room is a typical example of one inhabited by a dandy in his early twenties, with the walls paneled as the drawing room. There is a bed, desk, dresser, and a small bookshelf for private reading, and the south wall opens onto a balcony, from which anyone standing on the porch can be seen. The appearance of Jean, however, has caused Phillipe to be somewhat distracted and moody, and as such, after the first night there will be clothes scattered about the room where he has dropped them. His desk will be covered with papers, and among them kind DM's may wish to place one in which Phillipe writes about the framing of Jean, implicating his father. Near it will also be found another paper, the many notes and scribbles including speculation that Jean will go back to his rest if his innocence is revealed. Under the mattress is Phillipe's personal money-purse (25 sp).

Library

Bookshelves line the walls from floor to ceiling, soft chairs are scattered about and a large table in the center of the room holds maps and charts. Two doors open onto a small balcony with room for one chair. As the collection has been in the family for several generations, virtually any non-supernatural subject can be found. The DM may wish to use this room to insert clues to other adventures, or as a place to find a needed tome, keeping in mind that there are upwards of three hundred books here, and finding one may take time. Despite the age and range of topics, the entire library is worth only 200 gp.

Landing

The staircase comes to a head here, and the hall curves around, leaving an opening in the middle of the floor. The railing is just less than five feet high, and a simple chandelier sits at eye level, giving light to this floor and the one below. The walls are paneled like other rooms, but of a much lighter shade. Plants sit in the corners, and there is nothing of value here.

Master Bedroom

This large room has two doors leading into it, is painted an eye pleasing shade of green, and is the room in which Alphonse and Marguerite sleep. The dressing room contains a walk-in closet, a vanity and a large oval mirror (40 gp). The bed sits in the middle of the east wall, with a night table on each side. When Jean first enters and kills Marguerite, he will come in through the north door and leave by the south door. After Marguerite has died, she will be laid in state on the bed, and Alphonse will spend the next night in the library. Aside from the wardrobe of the LeMarcs, there is nothing of real value kept here, but some of the suits and dresses can fetch 20 gp each to a tailor (10 suits, 18 dresses).

Sunroom

This is a bright, open room with pale yellow walls and two large French-doors that open onto a large balcony. Chairs, couches and tables are scattered about the room, allowing the family a room to have private time and conversation. Paintings adorn the walls (six portrait size, 50 gp each; 2 5''x5'', 150 gp each), and plants rest in the corners. A table next to the south door holds a decanter and glass set (200 gp). The PC's will be primarily bedded here, and the room can fit five comfortably, seven with crowding. Any extras will be offered accommodation in the library.

Hall and Overlook

This hall opens from the back staircase, has green walls like the master bedroom, and the stairs continue up and around to the attic. From the stairs it extends almost the width of the house, and has a small step up to a landing overlooking the gallery. The rest of the hall contains decorative vases spaced along the walls (six, very bulky, 20 gp each).

Marie's Room

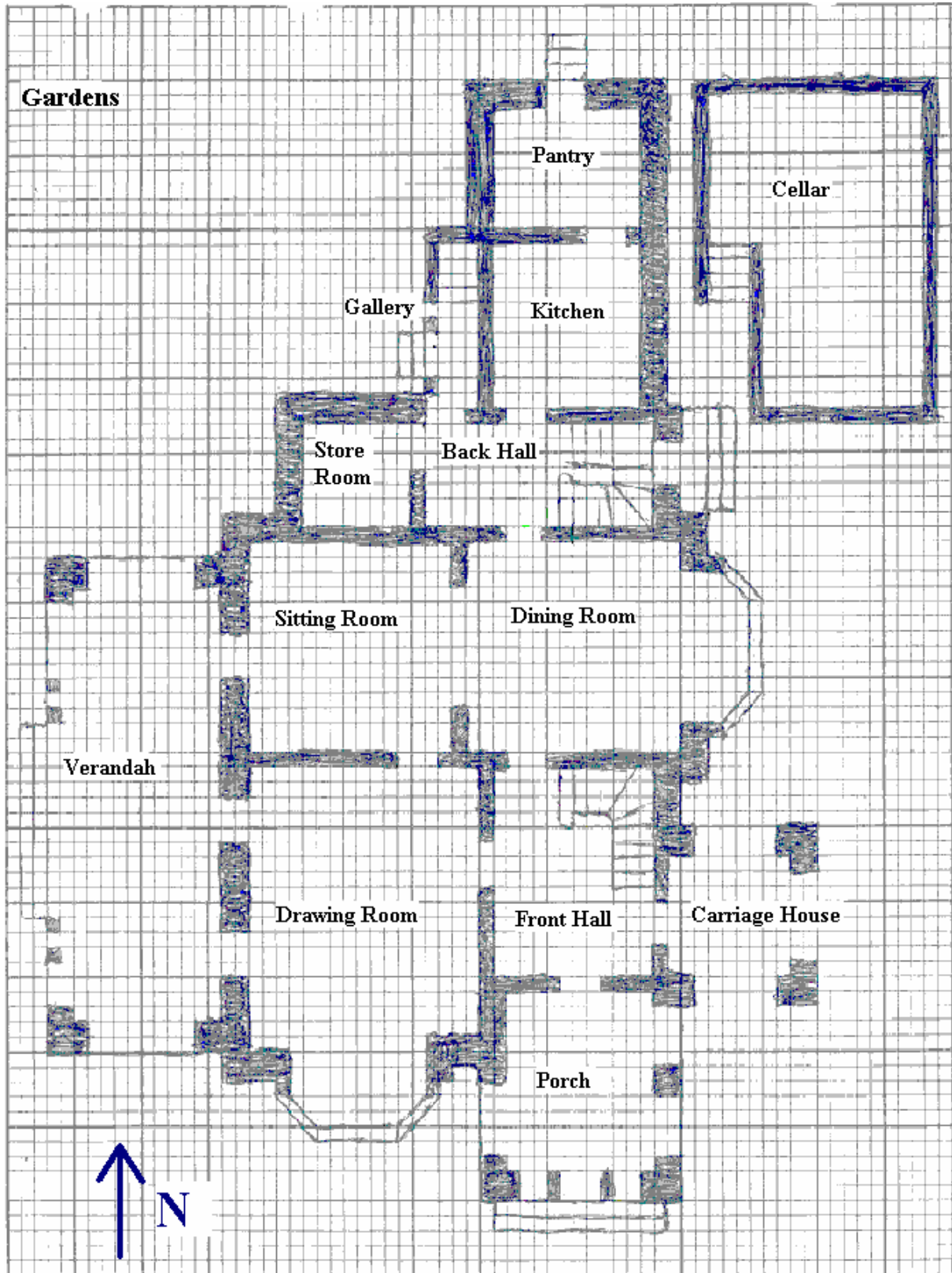
Marie's room sits about halfway up the stairs and opens onto the landing. Despite the size of the room, the conditions are relatively frugal, having just a bed, chair, table and wardrobe.

Nothing decorates the walls, but they are painted a pale yellow that subtly inspires good cheer. Marie will always be found here, with the exception of her walk during the middle afternoon. While here, if not sleeping, she either sits at the window listlessly staring out, or slowly paces back and forth. Since Claude's death, the LeMarcs have had to keep someone with her almost constantly, and as such, Marguerite will usually be here most of the day until she dies. Alphonse spends time here during the late afternoon, and Phillippe drops in and out throughout the day, attempting to cheer his sister. As the family members die off, she will be left more and more alone, unless some of the PC's keep her company.

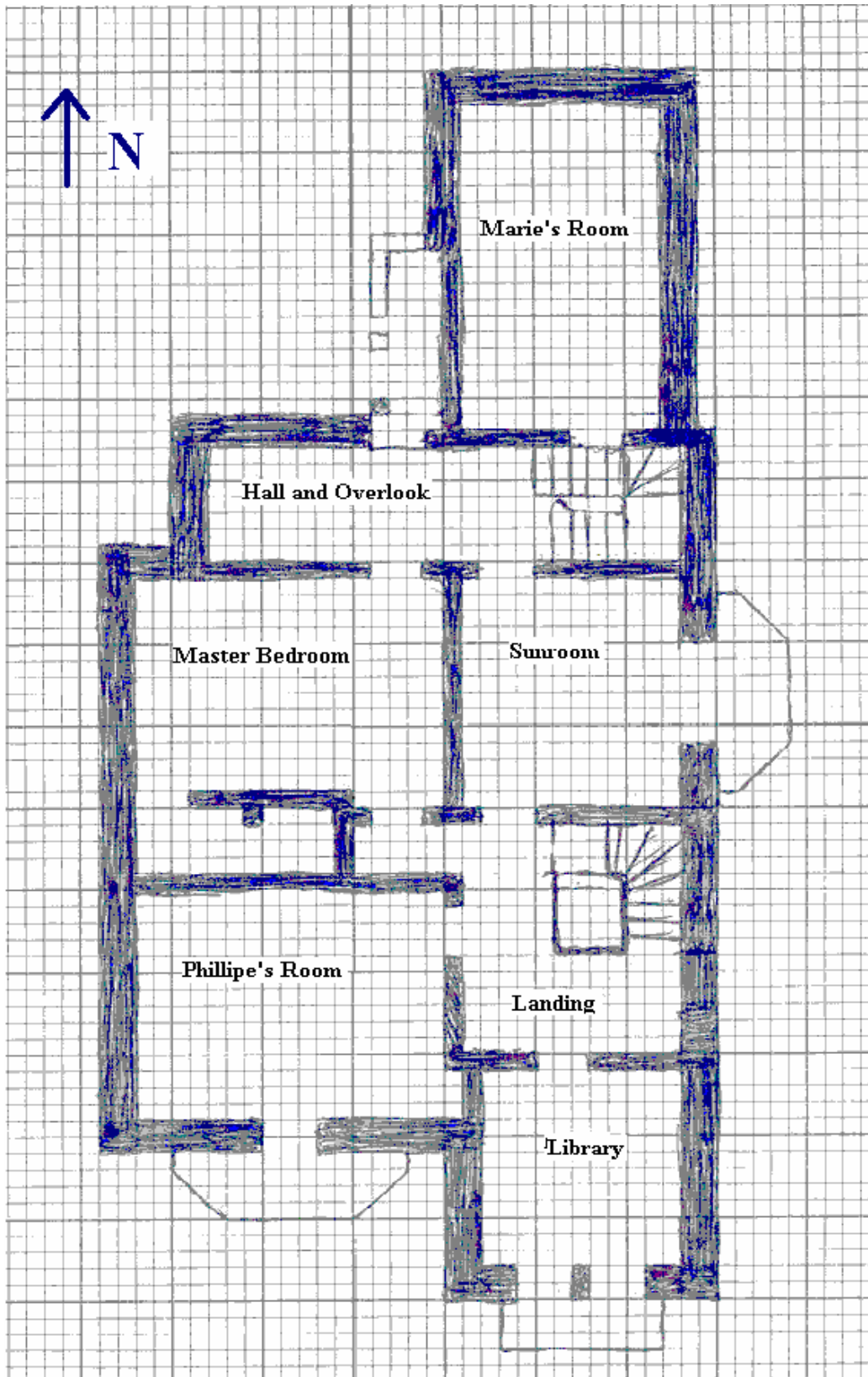
Attic

This is actually the space between the top floor and the peaked roof, and is used for storage, the headroom being five feet high at the peak. Due to the amount of old things stored here, it will take three hours to search the entire area, with a 10% chance per round of finding some random item, none worth more than 10 gp. If Jean is here and does not see the PC's as enemies yet, he will hide at the southern end of the building and ignore the PC's unless they stumble on to him.

LeMarc estate, first floor:



LeMarc estate, second floor:



Appendix 2: town of Chaumont

Chaumont has been left without detail in order to make it easier for the DM to slip it into an existing campaign. It lies approximately a mile from the LeMarc estate, and has a population of 1,900 (all humans). The PC's may end up visiting the town several times during the course of the adventure, either for supplies or to investigate the LeMarcs. All of the townspeople know of the family, and most have had dealings with Alphonse. The PC's will be able to find out the following information from nearly everyone they meet, and the DM should feel free to develop more rumors and stories as the adventure continues. Each time the PC's speak to a resident of the town, use the following tables to determine what stories are told, or pick and choose among them to enhance role-playing.

Chaumont (Small Town): Conventional; AL LN; 800 gp limit; Assets 76,000; Population 1,900; Isolated (Human 1,900)

Authority Figures: One Mayor, One Captain of Gendarmes, and Twenty Gendarmes

Important Characters: As the DM wishes

Answers to PC's questions about Jean's execution and/or the murder of Claude:

1-2: "Oh yes, I remember that. Claude had been sneaking around with LeMarc's daughter, you know, its no wonder that the old man had him killed."

3-4: "Jean Mouchet? He was one of Alphonse LeMarc's friends. It was a shame to hear that he killed someone. Funny, though, you would think that Alphonse would have tried to cover it up."

5-6: "I seen him, Jean, the day he was executed. He was raging about how old man LeMarc had set him up, and how he hadn't had nothing to do with the schoolmaster's death. Right up to the moment he dropped he was screaming about how he'd get back at 'em all."

7-8: "Claude was telling me just a few days before he died of how he was going to ask LeMarc for his daughter's hand. He had some friend who was going to give him the money to set himself up a bookstore. From what I know of Marie, I figure LeMarc would have wanted her out of the way. She's crazy, you know."

9: "I always thought that Marie was sweet on that Claude fellow, I never heard anything of Jean wanting her or being the jealous type. As a matter of fact, I heard one of the gendarmes say that Jean didn't have enough blood on him, considering how much was spattered around."

10: "Wish I could help you, but I never knew that Jean. Claude was nice enough, though."

Answers about Alphonse or the LeMarcs

1-2: "Well sir, I can tell you that LeMarc owes money to just about every business here in town, but I guess its only natural, considering most upper-class types live that way."

3-4: "I wouldn't mention debts to Alphonse. He's been trying to re-establish the family fortune for years, and he's got quite a temper when it comes to his 'status'. In fact, he goes out of his way to act snobby, even when there's no one around to impress."

5-6: "Yep, old man LeMarc has been in here several times. Threatened me that he'd spread rumors of substandard goods if I didn't lay off. Two can play at that game, I can tell you."

7-8: "Don't ever owe a favor to Alphonse. He's so concentrated on staying high-class that if he thinks there's something you can do for him, he'll drain you for everything you've got. You can't refuse either. He may not have money, but there's enough people here that'll do what he says, and he'll make your lives miserable."

9: "No sir, I will not tell you anything about Monsieur LeMarc. How dare you come in here and try to slander his good name!"

10: "Well, I never actually had any dealings with the LeMarcs, but I know they're very snobbish."

Appendix 3: NPCs

Statistics are not given for members of the LeMarc family, as the PC's are not expected to enter combat with them. However, the following notes can be used to develop the characters over the course of the adventure.

Alphonse LeMarc

Appearance – Alphonse is a portly, middle-aged man who appears to live a comfortable lifestyle. This is belied by the beginnings of threadbare patches on his coats. He is most concerned with maintaining the facade of the LeMarcs as well-to-do pillars of the community, and will not tolerate anything that threatens his family's standing or reputation.

Personality – Although normally a genial person, Alphonse behaves with obvious snobbery to those that he considers below him in any way. On the contrary, if he wishes to impress someone, he affects his or her mannerisms and attitudes, regardless of how fawning this makes him look.

Role-playing Tips – The character of Alphonse is inspired by the character of Hyacinth Bucket from the British sitcom “Keeping Up Appearances”. His actions should follow a more serious bent, as he is willing to do anything it takes to keep the image he has developed. The DM might wish to develop some rumors about him in the town; reputations ruined, families bought out and so on. Also, it must not be forgotten that the LeMarcs owe money to numerous creditors, both in the town and elsewhere. Alphonse will not look kindly on those who make an issue of his bills or his money.

Marguerite LeMarc

Appearance – Although slightly plump, Marguerite remains a striking figure. She usually wears severe dresses, and as the LeMarcs do not employ any servants, she bears the signs of a woman who has had to labor to get her family to where it is. Nevertheless, her bearing remains

aristocratic and imperious even at the best of times.

Personality – Her natural vivacity has been severely dampened by the recent events, and she has always displayed a keen interest in mysticism. She fully believes that her husband has called down a curse on the family by his actions, and takes Jean's appearance as an omen of worse to come.

Role-playing Tips – Marguerite's dalliances with the occult, although she has not encountered anything real, have left their mark. She is quiet and severe, and has grown moody and depressed. Her actions and speech is peppered with references to the occult, and until she dies she will spend much of her time praying or in “communion” with the spirits. She will not struggle against Jean, as she views his return as “justice”.

Phillipe LeMarc

Appearance – Phillipe is a good-looking man of about twenty-two. Although well groomed, of late he has been somewhat sloppy in his choice of clothes, and they will rarely match. His face shows the tension of his inner war between conscience and fear of his father.

Personality – Phillipe is developing his father's personality, but remains a good man at heart. His involvement with Jean's death bothers him more than he cares to admit, and were it not for fear of what Alphonse would do to him, he would gladly reveal all.

Role-playing Tips – Phillipe should be played as nervous, but not to the extreme that the PC's become suspicious of him. He will fight tooth and nail against Jean, probably waking the entire house doing so.

Marie LeMarc

Appearance – Before she succumbed to madness, Marie was a beautiful girl of 16. She was never mentally stable, but since killing Claude and being forced to implicate Jean, she has slipped even further into unreality. Her hair is now a tangled mess, and dark circles surround her eyes. They are also sunken in, as is most of the rest of her skin, giving her a skeletal look. Only the return of Jean gives her any vibrancy; the rest of the time, her face is dull and her eyes hooded.

Personality – Most of the time, Marie sits listlessly staring out of her bedroom window. When she is taken to the gardens for some air, she wanders around, looking at things without really seeing them. Under no circumstances will she venture near the rosebush that Claude died under. After Jean appears on the first night, she begins to show signs of life again. She will softly sing nonsense tunes to herself, be given over to bursts of maniacal giggling, and will spend hours making up, dressing and primping herself, “to be ready for him”. After her mother dies, she will begin to make cryptic comments in the vein of: “Claude and mama are together now,” and “Claude says he wants father to feel the way he does.”

Role-playing Tips – Marie would best be modeled after the character of Ophelia in Shakespeare’s Hamlet, especially as played by Lalla Ward in the 1980 BBC production starring Derek Jacobi and Patrick Stewart. If that production is not available, the performance by Helena Bonham Carter in Mel Gibson’s 1990 production would also be appropriate.

Jean Mouchet

Third Edition Statistics (based on the 3.5 Valpurleiche (Denizens of Dread), but some features were arbitrarily toned down for the adventure suggested level)

Valpurleiche (Hanged Man); Medium undead

Hit dice: 4d12 (27)
Initiative: -1
Speed: 20 ft
AC 14 (-1 dex, + 5 natural), touch 13, flatfooted 14
Base attack / grapple: +2 / +6
Attacks: slam +6 melee (1d6 +4)
Space/Reach: 5 ft / 5 ft
Special attacks: improved grab, strangle
Special qualities: restless, undead traits
Saves: Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +7
Abilities: Str 18 Dex 8 Con - Int 10 Wis 13 Cha 15
Skills: Intimidate +8, Listen +10, Move silently +8, sense motive +12, spot +10
Feats: Great Fortitude, Power attack
Climate / Terrain: any
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: none
Alignment: CE

Languages: Whatever is spoken locally.

Possessions: none.

Second Edition Statistics

Valpurgeist, Neutral Evil

Armor Class: 4
Movement: 9
Level/Hit Dice: 5
Hit Points: 28
THAC0: 15
No. Of Attacks: 2

Damage/Attack: 1d6/1d6 or by weapon

Special Attacks: Strangulation

Special Defenses: see below

Special Vulnerabilities: Light

Magic Resistance: nil

Str: 19

Dex: 12

Con: 19

Int: 13

Wis: 7

Cha: 4

Appearance

Jean appears dressed in the same clothes he went to trial and died in: a vest, long-sleeved shirt, trousers, and riding boots. They are tattered from his time in prison, and muddy from digging out of his grave. Although his skin has the pallor of death, he does not have the scent of decay a typical valpurgeist carries, as he has only been dead a day or two. His neck is obviously broken, and his head flops about loosely as he moves, unless he supports it with one hand. His eyes blaze with intelligence and hate. The noose that took his life still hangs from the remnants of his neck.

Jean can speak, but does not do so, unless he is speaking directly to Phillippe or Alphonse. He understands the local language, and can read and write.

Combat

When in combat, Jean will attack with his fists for 1d6 damage each. If both fists strike the target, Jean has gotten a grip around the throat of his victim, and will strangle for 1d8 points of damage each round. The victim must also make a save vs. Paralysis each round or fall unconscious from lack of oxygen. Those who do so will die on the next round of a crushed neck if not freed. To remove Jean's hands from the throat of his victim requires a successful bend bars attempt, and will result in his attacking whomever was most responsible. It is not possible to distract him, once his hands have locked. Cutting his arms off will also not free the victim.

Jean suffers 1d4 damage from contact with holy symbols and holy water, and is immune to all *sleep*, *charm* and *hold* spells. Due to the level of his hatred for the LeMarcs, he cannot be turned as long as they are alive. Furthermore, in life, Jean had very weak eyesight. This has been exacerbated by undeath, and any sort of bright light causes him extreme pain and will serve to keep him at bay. If a *light*, *continual light*, or any related spell is cast on him, he immediately flees the area if able. Torch light, lamplight, or other "natural" lights (including sunlight) cause him to suffer a -4 to his attack rolls, and he will attempt to leave the lighted area. If that is not possible, he will under no circumstances attack the light source, unless he is cornered, at which time he attacks until he can escape. Overcast days do not affect him, as the light is diffused.

A typical valpurgeist requires 2d4 days to reform if its body is intact, and twice that if not. Jean is unique in that if his body is intact and not too badly damaged, it takes him merely 24 hours to restore himself and the following midnight he will rise again. Should his body be badly damaged, but not completely destroyed (i.e. by fire), it requires the usual time, and twice that if totally destroyed.

Third Edition Combat

Since Jean is a toned down valpurleiche, he doesn't have the animate rope and regeneration abilities.

For Improved Grab, Restless and Strangle, please see Denizens of Dread.

Confronting Jean

Jean will not immediately attack the PC's, even if they stumble upon him accidentally. He will, however, respond to any attack, and will consider them enemies from that time forth. Several times during the adventure Jean hides in and around the house and may be encountered either there or at some point during his attempts to destroy the LeMarcs. Each time the room he currently occupies is entered those doing so must check to see if they notice him (Int -2 or DC 15). If they are actively searching for him

the roll goes down to Int +2 or DC 10. If Jean is not immediately spotted and does not yet consider the PC's enemies, he will remain still in the hopes that he will not be noticed. If he has added them to his list, he attacks immediately, gaining all appropriate surprise penalties. The first sighting of Jean is cause for a Fear check. Facing a fully restored Jean after defeating him before is cause for a Horror check.

During battle, Jean avoids light at all costs, as detailed above. During the day, the storm keeps the light down to tolerable levels and he suffers no penalties. The best way for the PC's to resolve the adventure once they figure out this weakness is to corner him and bring Alphonse to confront him. Jean will not respond verbally to questions, but will act confused if presented with Alphonse's story. For his part, Alphonse will urge the PC's to destroy Jean without mercy. Unless they have come to suspect their host, they may well do so, continuing the adventure. Should they suspect Alphonse, they may attempt to find out the truth directly from Jean, leading to more and more frantic attempts by Alphonse to have him destroyed. At this Jean will speak, grating his story out in tortured wheezes. If the patriarch is threatened with Jean, however, he will break down and confess. Once that is done, a tired smile will cross the dean man's face, and he will collapse back into his rest.

The above is the most likely scenario for resolving the adventure, but the PC's may uncover Alphonse at some other time. Should his confession be taken away from Jean's presence, Jean will immediately sense what has happened and make his way to where it is occurring. Once he has arrived, he will gratefully smile at the PC's, and then collapse.

Adapting and scaling the Adventure

While set in Ravenloft, the actual location is not specified, allowing the DM to place Chaumont wherever he or she pleases. Appropriate domains in the Demiplane would include Mordent, Dementlieu, Richemulot and Borca.

If the DM wishes to use this as a Masque of the Red Death adventure, it can be set in Northern France, Canada or the South-central United States (Louisiana, Mississippi, Tennessee, etc.). The basic idea of the adventure is somewhat Victorian, and as such would be difficult to insert into a Forgotten Realms or Greyhawk campaign, but with work it could be done.

This adventure is aimed at new characters 1st to 3rd level, but as it relies more on detective work than action, it can be adjusted to 0 level characters if need be. If, on the other hand, the PC's are higher level, Jean's weakness can be downgraded and his powers and statistics increased, adding to the challenge. Even so, it is not recommended that the adventure be played with characters higher than 5th level. DM's wishing to add to the challenge might also consider returning Claude in undeath. His focus would be on Marie, and he and Jean might conceivably work together towards the common end.