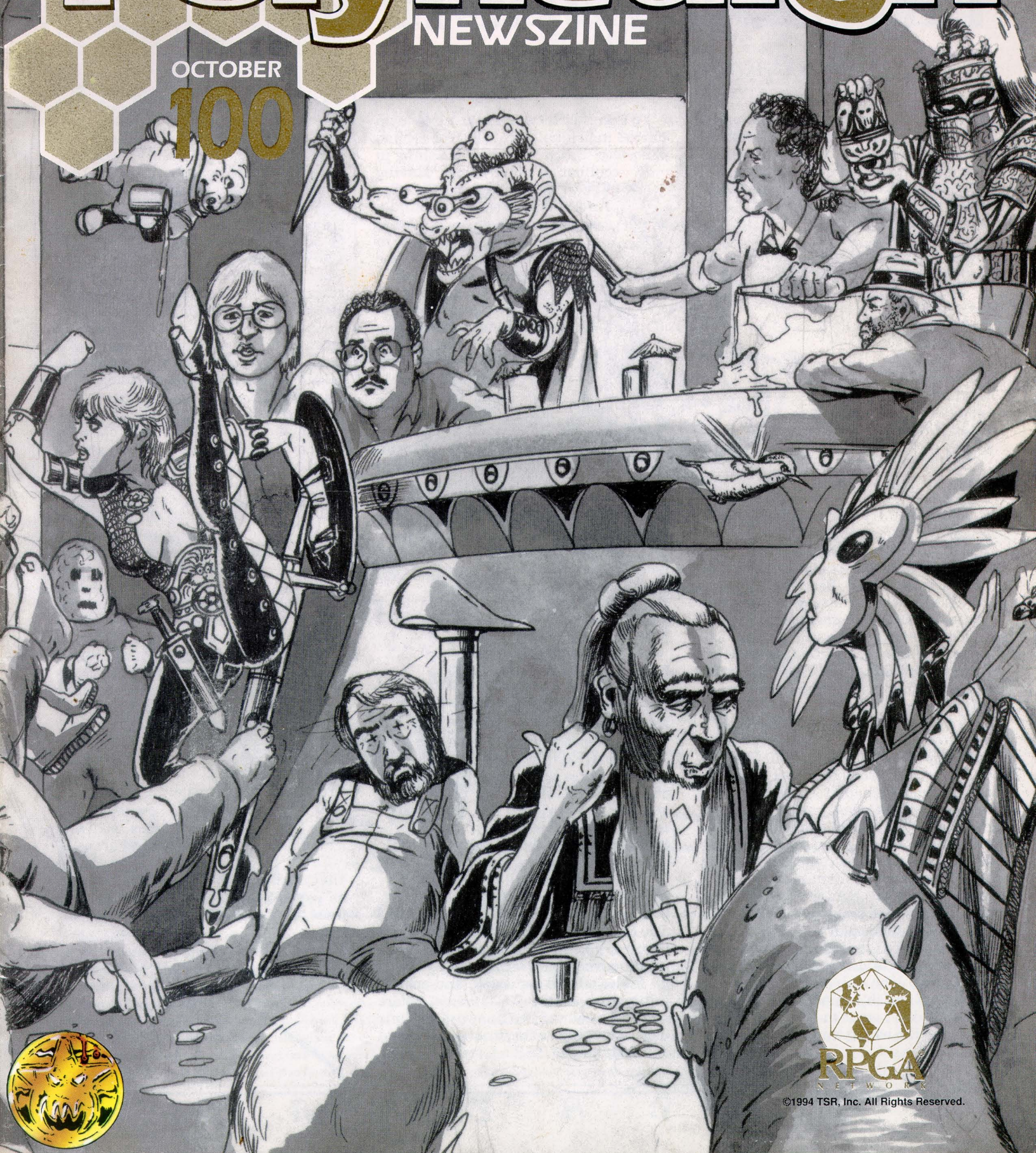


Polyhedron[®]

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Conspired To Succeed

New Professions for Dark Conspiracy Players

by **Alex Iwanow**

Dark Conspiracy game enthusiasts can choose from a diverse assemblage of more than 60 careers for their PCs. From astronaut to politician, cyborg escapee to psychic test subject, this broad array of options encourages the creation of a colorful, well-rounded, three-dimensional character. Now, Dark Conspiracy GMs can insert these new career templates into their campaigns, giving their players an even wider palette with which to paint.

Genre Writer

Yours is a life of constant corrosion and blow-by-blow personality dismemberment. Unwilling to bow down to the terminal edicts of your decomposing profession (fruitless literary rehash, transparent and predictable prose), you suffer and starve, bleeding your vision onto the keyboard. Someday, perhaps posthumously, your convictions will ennoble you.

These days the television is preferred to the paperback. A few hardcore publishing houses subsist by printing technical documents (as physical backup to their silicon counterparts) and mailers for the megacorps. The screenwriting market chokes on its formulaic gorge, while PBS stations have sold out the meaning of their collective acronym. With illiteracy at its apocalyptic peak, traditional, text-oriented literature is condemned to trifling underground circuits (nickel-budgeted pamphlets, 5 1/4" floppy disks) from which you barely eke out a living.

There were times that you were sure your efforts were futile, hazy bouts of intoxication in which ghosts dressed in suits and ties would smoke through the walls to stamp OBSOLESCENCE across your forehead. But living in the underground for so long conveyed its rewards, as you've been granted glimpses of entities, real entities, whose existence would otherwise seem plausible only in your fiction. Through ingenious journalistic conspiracies, you developed a fledgling understanding of these

unknowable sources of evil. One word puzzle in a television listing for a channel that didn't exist cited these beings as Dark Minions.

Basing your literary output on something the megacorps seem intent on shrouding in mystery could get you erased. But oh! Immortality beckons with every line, each paragraph, each syllable! You must find like-minded individuals, other stout-willed believers who are dedicated to ferreting out these creatures. What better way to conduct research than first-hand?

Entry: Intelligence 5+

First Term Skills: Computer Operation 1, Observation 2, Psychology 1, Willpower 2

Subsequent Term Skills: A total of 5 levels from any one or a combination of the following: Act/Bluff, Bargain, Business, Forgery, Language, Luck, Observation, Persuasion, Psychology, and Streetwise.

Contacts: Two per term: editor, journalist, publisher, fellow writer, or any NPC of any occupation who is an admirer of your work. On a d10 roll of 9+, the contact is foreign.

Special: Genre writers may have two secondary activities per term and receive 1/4 of their normal income each term.

Institutionalized

You witnessed a transaction of supernatural significance (consult the GM for specifics), then foolishly reported it. Subsequently branded a "fraudulent attention-seeker" and "societal agitator of criminal proportions," you were requested to undergo memory-reducing neurosurgery in return for your old life.

Rebuke met with reprimand, and retaliation resulted in your banishment to a mental health facility. Your "evaluation" has been going on for incalculable months . . . or years.

You are certain that the horrible creatures you saw were not the product of "ruptured cerebral membranes" or

"genetic fetal trauma." Hallucinations don't draw blood, and figments can't tear flesh. It can only make you wonder why the megacorps consider you such a dangerous glitch in their veil of deception, having made you out as some drooling lunatic in front of everyone that used to know you.

You've been watching the doors, observing the guards, acknowledging the patterns. Escape is inevitable.

Entry: Forced due to insanity charges.

Skills: Learned from fellow inmates. A total of 6 levels from any one or a combination of the following: Act/Bluff, Bargain, Forgery, Human Empathy (if Emp 1+), Instruction, Language, Lockpick, Melee Combat (unarmed), Observation, Persuasion, Pickpocket, Psychology, Stealth, Willpower.

Contacts: Two per four-year term: sympathetic psychiatrist or nurse, just about any type of NPC who has been similarly condemned. Consult your GM for specifics or advice.

Special: After one term, the character has a chance to escape each subsequent year. On a d10 roll: 1-2 failure; 3-7 no opportunity; 8+ success.

Progressive Zoologist

You make your living through the capture, maintenance, study, and domestication of the ever-evolving catalogue of beasties and other mutated terran creatures of the Out-Law zones of North America. With escapism on just about everyone's mind, the survival rate of zoos, circuses, and animal exhibition has not receded drastically. Of course, what was a public privilege years ago can be afforded only by the rich today. Private and corporate zoos have become fashionable investments among the gnomenkultura and their ilk.

To be honest, you despise (or perhaps envy) your affluent employers and do not enjoy being on the submissive end of the leash. But without their funds to propagate armed escort into the Out-Law zones to cage potential zoo beasties,

you'd surely fall prey to the creatures with which you are so fascinated.

Employment by the gnomes translates into dealing with the tentacles of the megacorps, which you've found to be responsible for turning loose some of your more exotic captures. Sedan-sized vultures, three-headed camels, and the occasional chimera seem to be acceptable. But the technology and force with which you've been equipped has allowed the capture of specimens a dozen times stranger, many of them humanoid and intelligent! Ironically, your superiors insist that you do not speak of, think about, or publish anything on these latter discoveries.

You are confused. You are suspicious. You are frustrated. You must find a way to escape the shadow of your employers, piece together a similarly curious team, then resume your otherworldly research independently.

Entry: Intelligence 5+, Empathy 2+

First Term Skills: Animal Empathy 2, Biology 3, Small Arms (Rifle) 1

Subsequent Term Skills: 6 levels from any one or a combination of: Animal Empathy, Biology, Horsemanship, Instruction, Melee Combat, Observation, Psychology, Swimming, Tracking, Vehicle Use (Wheeled Vehicle).

Contacts: One per term: biologist, entertainer (animal-related), environmentalist, hunter, Out-Law zone biker or nomad, veterinarian, zoo keeper. On d10 roll of 10, contact is foreign.

Special: PC receives trained animal/beast as pet. Specifics are left to the GM.

Sewer Scum

Certain eroding events took place within the past few years of your life, leading you to reject civilization altogether. You retreated to the effectively antisocial tunnels underneath the metroplex: the quarantined sewer net. Through close-call tribulations and an abundance of sheer luck, you absorbed the basic tricks of subterranean survival, which mostly consisted of stealing from the surface, then fleeing back home, where no right-minded larceny victim dared to follow.

Despite a relatively successful adaptation, you eventually concluded that your new lifestyle was too exhausting and dangerous to be effectively maintained.

Then one day it dawned upon you how someone of such unique environmental competence could make quite a bit of cash. Catering mostly to the bounty hunter crowd, you were happily hired by those needing to travel surreptitiously. Some of your more passionate clientele revealed much about the Dark Minions, building on your suspicion that their existence was not a fiction.

Elated by their determination and rapture, you later dedicated yourself to the destruction of these faceless, plotting menaces.

After scraping away all the scum that made your life so miserable, you decide that there are members of humanity worth saving.

Entry: Constitution 5+

First Term Skills: Observation 2, Swimming 2, Willpower 1

Subsequent Term Skills: A total of 6 levels from any one or a combination of the following in Group A. Or, pick two from Group B.

Group A: Navigation, Melee Combat, Observation, Stealth, Swimming, Tracking, Vessel Use (Boat), Willpower.

Group B: AGL +1, STR +1, CON +1

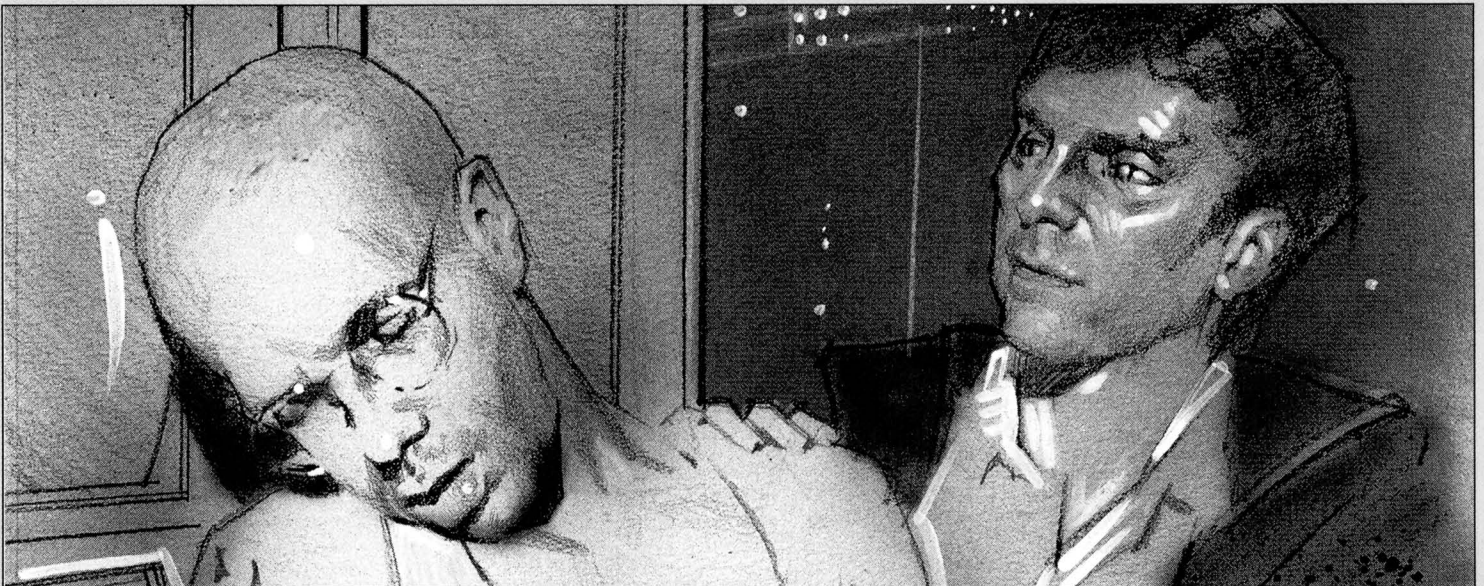
Contacts: One per term: bounty hunter, mercenary, merchant marine, or any other frequent, satisfied customer.

Special: Navigation and Tracking skills can be applied only in sewer environments. If these skills are/were taken in a previous or future career, differentiate them on your character sheet as "sewer" or "traditional" skills.

There exists a dangerously high level of supernatural presence in the urban underground. Hence, there is a chance each term that a sewer scum character will be forced to abandon his career forever, having experienced some unfathomably horrible manifestation of evil. The GM will provide details on this occurrence, which takes place on a d10 roll of 6+ (roll each term).

All skills or attribute levels gained for that term are lost. But no substantial period of time passes for the character, either. □

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Le POLYEDRE du Mort

tout le mois
de Juin



NO.142

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03 ... NOTES FROM HQ

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Brad awoke with a start. What the hell was that? He jumped out of bed and grabbed the Beretta M92S from his bedside table. "No one can get in here," he muttered to himself. "I made sure I locked everything up before I came to bed."

He crept out into the lounge room of his apartment. The room was lit by the glow of the orange fog light on the street; the venetian blinds cast striped shadows across the room. A train rumbled past behind the building, rattling the windows.

Brad padded silently over to the door and checked the locks. Everything's just like I left it. I must have been hearing things.

A mug rattled quietly in the sink. Must be those damn mice again! Brad crept across the lounge room, stopping just next to the door. He nudged the door open slightly with his left hand and pushed the barrel of the pistol through with his right.

An amorphous shape swelled from the kitchen sink, flowing over the edge and down onto the floor. Even in the dim light, Brad could make out the veins that covered its skin.

"What the..." muttered Brad, pushing the door open.

The thing dropped out of the sink with a plop. Within a second, it solidified into a human sized creature and stood up. Its yellow eyes glowed evilly, and it snarled at Brad, its lips pulling back to show two rows of pointed teeth....

apartment. There was no sign of forced entry, and given the position of the corpse, it was not possible for someone to have murdered the victim and exited through the door. Investigators at the scene were quoted as saying that the victim must have been "strangled through the keyhole." Since then, any unexplained stranglings in which the victim has been found in a secure location have been attributed to the "keyhole strangler."

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Unlike most Dark Minions, Keyhole Stranglers are remarkably human-like. Slightly taller than the average human, their dark skin gives them the appearance of an African American. However, they only tend to emerge at nights and never in well-lit areas; this may be because their skin appears to be dark blue when seen under bright lights.

All Keyhole Stranglers wear some form of dark glasses when they are out in public, in order to hide their glowing, yellow eyes. Some pose as blind men, while others prefer to be more fashionable. However, without the glasses, they give away their real nature.

The fingers of a Keyhole Strangler are extremely long and exceptionally strong, capable of easily crushing a

without a trace

ASSASSINATION, DARK CONSPIRACY STYLE
BY GEOFF SKELLAMS

KEYHOLE STRANGLERS

Strength: 5	Education: 5
Intelligence: 7	Initiative: 4
Empathy: 4	Hits: 20/40
Skill/Damage: 7/4 (-/-)	Agility: 9
Special Abilities: Dissolution, Human Empathy, and Psychic Invisibility	Charisma: 3
	Move: 3/10/20 (2*)
Constitution: 7	# Appearing: 1

The figures in parentheses are for use when the Keyhole Strangler is in "liquid" form.

There are times when the Dark Lords find it expedient to quietly do away with a human who is too close to the truth. While it is possible that the individual in question could be harassed by corrupted authorities (such as elements of the police or intelligence community), there are times when killing the person quickly can resolve a situation far more effectively.

The Keyhole Stranglers are a race of Dark Minions who perform network for the Dark Lords. They usually are assigned to cases in which the target is overly paranoid, and cannot be eliminated by a simple "accident."

THE NAME

The name "Keyhole Strangler" first came about after one of the first assassinations by this race. The victim was found brutally strangled, lying behind the front door of his

human larynx within seconds. They also have two rows of extremely sharp teeth that are constantly being replaced, much like a shark's.

To approach their targets, the Stranglers usually make use of their dissolution ability, liquefying themselves and oozing through tight spaces. In this form, they resemble a blueish-gray pile of shapeless flesh, criss-crossed with deep purple veins. Most people who see a Strangler in its liquid form usually have to fight to keep their last meal down.

The Stranglers are extremely vulnerable when they are in their liquefied form, especially to heat. Consequently, they tend to remain in this form for only as long as it takes to gain access to their prey.

MODUS OPERANDI

A Keyhole Strangler usually is sent to dispatch an individual who is extremely paranoid about security and who makes sure that there are no openings available for an enemy to exploit.

The Strangler normally begins by keeping a close watch on the target, in order to learn their habits and specific locations. Once it knows the target's schedule, it moves in for the kill.

It waits until the target is locked up, usually at night. Then, it transforms into its liquid form and squeezes through whatever openings it can find. These can include (but are not limited to) kitchen drains, sewer pipes, air-conditioning ducts, gas pipes, etc. The actual diameter of the opening is insignificant to the Strangler. It can stretch out its liquid form and

squeeze through openings as small as a keyhole if need be. However, the wider the opening, the faster the Strangler can move through it.

Once access has been gained, the Strangler transforms back to its physical form and closes in for the kill. It normally strikes quickly and brutally, usually strangling the victim if at all possible, although they have used knives and other such weapons on rare occasions.

The Keyhole Stranglers are an unusually sadistic race, and they relish the look on the face of a dying victim; a Strangler will not kill unless it can see the victim's face clearly. Normally, this means the Strangler will attack from the victim's front, although they have been known to sneak up behind someone who is looking in a mirror.

Once the target has died, the Strangler will leave the scene the same way that it entered. They do not stay at the murder site for long; as soon as the victim is definitely dead, they leave as quickly as possible. Keyhole Stranglers have been known to be able to gain entrance to a location, murder the target and make their escape within five minutes.

USING KEYHOLE STRANGLERS

There are a number of ways to use the Stranglers in your campaign.

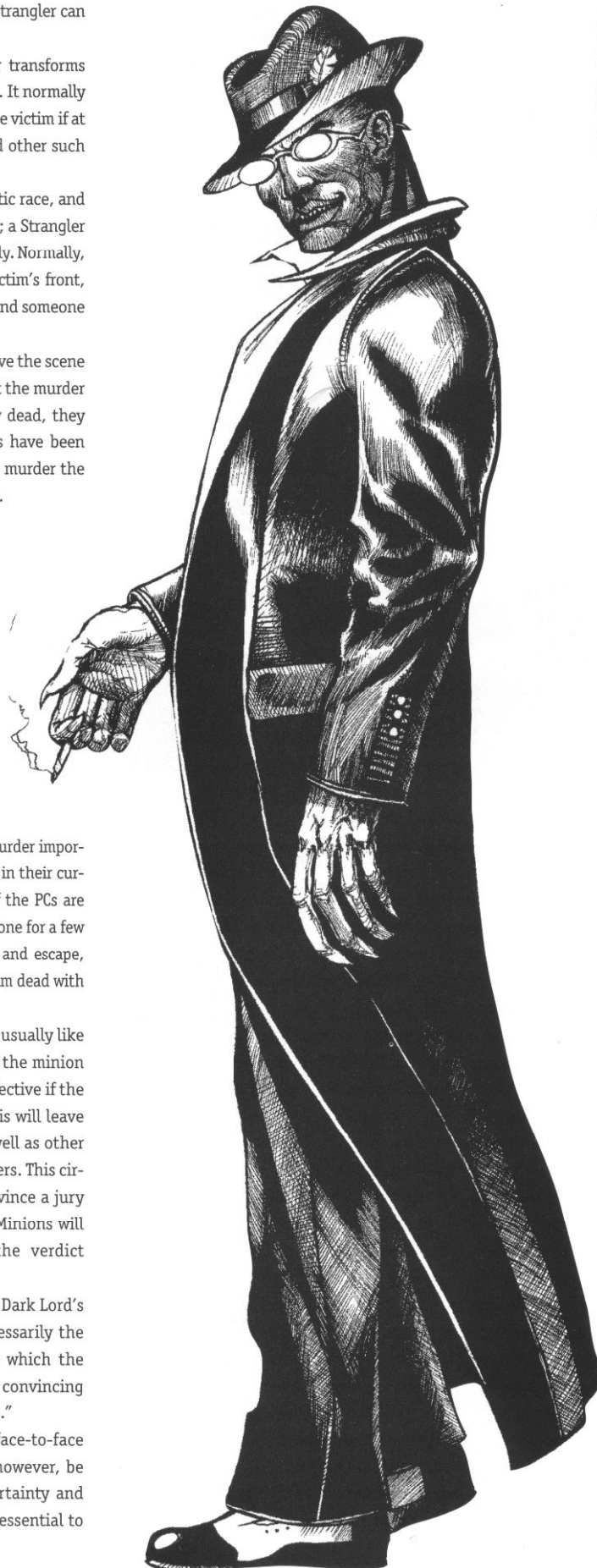
The most obvious way is as a direct threat to the players. This could happen if the players are getting too close to the truth, as far as the Dark Lords are concerned. Late one night, a Strangler will ooze through a drain to where one of the PCs is and attempt to strangle them.

A more subtle approach is to have a Strangler murder important NPCs that the player characters are relying on in their current missions. This can be extremely disturbing if the PCs are guarding an NPC at night and they leave the NPC alone for a few minutes—long enough for the Strangler to strike and escape, leaving only a corpse and the shock of finding victim dead with no real clues as to how it happened.

To further complicate things, the Dark Lords usually like to follow the assassination with the framing of the minion hunters with the murder. This is particularly effective if the PCs are guarding the target to some extent. This will leave their fingerprints all over the crime scene, as well as other physical evidence, such as hair and clothing fibers. This circumstantial evidence is usually enough to convince a jury the accused PC is guilty. If need be, the Dark Minions will fabricate other evidence to ensure that the verdict is assured.

The police in question are usually under the Dark Lord's influence to some extent, but this is not necessarily the case. There has been more than one case in which the police simply were deceived by an extremely convincing minion who played the role of the "eye-witness."

If used properly, the PCs may never come face-to-face with a Keyhole Strangler. The creatures can, however, be used effectively to increase the level of uncertainty and paranoia within a game session, two elements essential to a good horror scenario. ■



ILLUS. TED BEARGEON

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