

Finger Biter©1998
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Call of Cthulhu

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This adventure was inspired, in part, by "The Little Finger on the Left Hand," by Ardash Mayhar. It is copyright 1990 by the Ardash Mayhar. The copy I read is in *100 Twisted Little Tales of Torment*, which contains tales selected by Stefan Dziemianowicz, Robert Weinberg, and Martin H. Greenberg. It was published by Barnes & Noble Books in 1998.

Introduction

This is a short, but nasty, adventure for a small group of investigators. It is set in 1920s Scotland, but can easily be modified for use in other times and places.

The adventure is ideal for times when a short, one session adventure is needed, or as a break between larger adventures.

Getting the Investigators Involved

It is assumed that the investigators are in Europe, preferably in Scotland. However, they can be in any part of the world, provided they can travel to Scotland in a reasonable amount of time.

One of the investigators will receive an urgent letter from an old friend or associate who is aware of the investigator's involvement in the strange and unusual. The letter reads as follows:

Dear x,

I hope this letter finds you well. I apologize in advance for my brevity, but the pain I am suffering moves me to get right to the point.

As you might know, I journeyed to Scotland some months ago to conduct genealogical research on my family. My research went well, then I met with a terrible disaster. At first, I doubted the true horror of my experience, but at this time the truth is undeniable. I must ask your help in this matter for I feel that you might well be my only salvation.

Sincerely,

Clarence MacDougal

The letter includes information on how to reach the village where MacDougal is staying as well as a hand drawn map showing the location of the inn. By following the directions, the investigators will have no trouble reaching MacDougal.

Keeper's Background

In the 15th century the successful MacDougal family built a tower and a village grew up around it. The family and the village prospered for some time until 1751. In that year Andrew MacDougal entered into a deal with a terrible being that promised him gold in return for certain considerations. To cover the true source of the gold, Andrew claimed that when he had a well dug beneath the tower, he found gold. Andrew enjoyed his new wealth, until he found out what some of the "certain considerations" were. At that time, Andrew went to the church to have the minister drive out the creature.

Unfortunately, the exorcism had no real effect on the creature, except to anger it and cause it to take action against the MacDougal family. The creature bit a finger from the hand of each of the six MacDougals while they slept. It then told Andrew that he and his fellow MacDougals were doomed. Andrew sent a letter to his youngest brother, Ian, who was away in London. Ian thought his brother had gone mad and tried to persuade him to seek help. However, when news reached Ian of his brother's death, he left London immediately and returned home. Over the next year, all the other MacDougals went insane and died, despite all of Ian's efforts.

In desperation, Ian purchased a dozen kegs of black powder and used them to destroy the family tower. He gave a large quantity of the gold to the church and used the rest to start a new life in America.

Unfortunately, this was not the end of the tale. The creature Andrews had dealt with returned to the village. It performed a vile ritual and placed the severed fingers into the mouths of its victims. The fingers crawled down into their owners' stomachs and a vile contagion spread through the corpses. They twisted and changed in their coffins and, the next night, rose from their graves as Finger-Biters. Instinctively, they crawled back to their old home and have dwelt there ever since.

The creatures stay within the ruins of their old home and only attack those that come too close to the ruins at night. Because the local people know the evil reputation of the ruins, they steer clear of it. Hence, the creatures get few opportunities to take victims. They did recently take a finger from Ian Bannerman. Bannerman, a travelling salesman, who made the mistake of visiting the ruins at night to see if any gold remained. Bannerman was driven mad by his experience and, in his madness, came back to serve the Finger-Biters. In return for small bits of gold, he does various things for the Finger-Biters. Mainly he uses some of the gold to get victims, typically prostitutes, for the Finger-Biters. He knocks the victims out and drives her to the ruins. A Finger-Biter then takes a finger and Bannerman drives the unconscious victim back and dumps her in some alley.

Investigation

The following details the information that might become available to the investigators.

Clarence MacDougal

When the investigators arrive at the inn, they will be told they are expected. The investigators will find MacDougal in his room at the inn. The man will greet them warmly from his bed, but he will appear pale, nervous and frightened. The investigators will see that his left hand is swathed in bandages. The investigators will notice that MacDougal seems to be in pain and that he occasionally steals nervous glances at his bandaged hand.

After some preliminary small talk, MacDougal will relate the following story:

It might surprise you to know that despite all the research I have done in history, I knew almost nothing of my own family history. In fact, when I checked, it seemed to simply begin in America in 1783. I know that does not sound very odd, since so many people started over in the new United States. However, my family has passed down a number of heirlooms and there is, of course, my family's wealth which is based solidly on gold. Through some diligent research, I managed to trace my ancestors back to this village and I set out at once to come here. I now greatly regret this.

MacDougal will pause and take a large drink of whiskey at this point. He will then say:

I suppose you are wondering about my bandages. Well, you see I lost a finger. As I mentioned, I came here in search of my family history and I found much more than I bargained for.

I went to the ruins at night, despite the warnings of the villagers. Naturally, I dismissed their superstitions out of hand. Now that is a funny way to put it, now that I do not have a full hand. Anyway, I went there and looked at the ruins. I thought I heard something moving in the stones, so I went closer. I supposed at the time it was rats, but it turned out to be something larger. Something that was most definitely not a rat.

Something horrid and furry came from the stones. I did not get a good look at it, for it moved very fast and it was, as I said, night. I felt a sharp jerk on my finger, and was horrified to see it missing at the knuckle. I stanching the flow with my handkerchief and made my way back to the village. My assistant took the care to a nearby town to fetch a doctor and he did a fine job stitching me up.

MacDougal will pause again, and take another large drink of whiskey. A grimace of pain will come across his face and observant investigators will see a faint glint of madness in his eyes for just a second. He will then continue his tale.

I told the doctor that I could still feel my finger. He mentioned phantom limbs. You, know, that people who have lost limbs will often feel itches in the limb that is missing. He said that he had not heard of such cases with fingers, but that the theory would be the same. However, I am not feeling itches. It feels like something is gnawing and rending my finger. Like some horrid teeth are tearing the flesh right down to the bone. I feel that something in the hole has my finger. I think that madness will overtake me unless I get it back. I must have it back!

MacDougal will do his best to convince the investigators to go find his finger. He will also do his best to convince them that he is not insane.

David Zuckerman

Zuckerman is MacDougal's assistant. He will back up MacDougal's story. If he is asked in private about MacDougal's mental state, he will say that MacDougal was perfectly fine until he went to the tower. He is not sure what is going on but will say "You know, if a man had his finger taken by a rat...or something...he certainly would not rest well knowing some horrid creature had a piece of himself."

Zuckerman will have nothing else to add.

The Villagers

Provided the investigators are polite, the villagers will be willing to speak to them. The villagers know about the MacDougal ruins, which are looked upon as a place best left alone. Some of the older villagers know stories about the place and will be willing to share them with the investigators, perhaps over a friendly cup of whiskey or two. The younger villagers know that the ruins have a bad reputation and the few that have been there think it is infested with rats. In any case, the investigators will be hard pressed to get any villager to go near the ruins at night.

A Story About the Ruins

As mentioned above, some of the older villagers know the traditional story of the ruins, which is as follows:

According to the old stories, the MacDougals were a well respected family and rose to a position of some prominence. They had a small tower built and a village built around that. The village prospered for some time until madness came to the tower. The madness came shortly after Andrew MacDougal found gold. It is said that when a well was being dug in the tower, gold was found. Whatever the source, the MacDougals had plenty of gold to spend. But, the gold seemed to have a price, for they were never quite right again. Some stories say the MacDougals each cut off a finger in their madness, for they were spoken of as "the nine-finger MacDougals." Some of the older people whispered that the MacDougal family had made a deal with Satan and that he was collecting his interest for a diabolical loan.

All this madness came to an end when the tower was exploded from within

and burned well into the night. After that the tale of the MacDougals came to an end.

Of course, the story of the ruins isn't at an end. Some say the place is still plagued by the devil or his minions. Whatever the case, none of us go near those ruins, and if you are wise, you will stay away as well.

The villagers do not have much to add to the tale. If the investigators ask for more information, they will be told to check the church records.

The villagers know about MacDougal's wound and some of them have been speaking of the return of the "nine-finger MacDougals." However, most of the villagers believe he had a nasty run in with a large rat.

The Church Records

The church records are kept by the minister, Alan Gibson. Gibson is in his late fifties and enjoys talking to people. He will be happy to talk to the investigators about the ruins. According to his records, the tower was constructed in the 15th century and the village sprang up around it. In 1781, a member of the MacDougal family came to the church and asked the minister to perform an exorcism on the tower to drive out an evil spirit that plagued them. There is no mention in the records as to whether the exorcism was performed or not. The church records also list several burials for the MacDougal family during 1782. If the investigators think to check the birth records, they will learn that all the MacDougals except the nineteen year old Ian were dead by the end of 1782. In early 1783, after the death of Ian's wife, the church records list that the tower "exploded in the night" and that "all burnable parts were burned." The church records list a large donation of gold by Ian Macdougal on January 9, 1783. The last entry on the MacDougals reports that the family graves were desecrated in late 1783. No further record exists of the Macdougals.

If asked, Gibson will say that his hypothesis is that madness struck the family. He will say that he has read that madness can run in families. He will also speculate that perhaps the well mentioned in the village tradition was contaminated with something. If he learns what MacDougal said about his finger, he will definitely think that there is madness in the MacDougal blood and he will urge the investigators to seek professional help for their friend.

Newspaper Reports

If the investigators decide to check any nearby towns for information, they might learn that a few newspapers have reports of women being attacked and having their fingers hacked off. If the investigators check further, they will be able to learn that the women involved are prostitutes. In each case they report being picked up by a strange man, with a missing finger, who clubbed them. After that, they just remember waking up in an alley with a missing finger. Each will report that their wound was carefully bandaged, which struck them as odd. None of the prostitutes will be able to give a good description of their attacker, who is Bannerman. If the Keeper desires, some suspicion might be cast on Clarence MacDougal.

Maps/Places

The following details the maps and places for the adventure.

The Village of Dunval

The village consists of about two dozen houses, a charming inn, as well as a few small businesses. The major industry of the village is the raising of sheep and the preparation of wool.

The Ruins

The ruins are those of the old MacDougal tower. Even after all the centuries, it is evident that the tower was destroyed (as opposed to just falling into ruin). The area immediately around the ruins is surprisingly desolate, as if the soil itself was poisoned.

The ruins have been picked clean over the years by the weather and people brave (or ignorant) enough to come in search of valuables. All that remains is the broken stones and a pile of rubble in the center of what was once the tower.

If the area around the ruins is checked, a successful Spot Hidden or Tracking skill roll will reveal that there has been activity around the ruins. There are signs of footprints leading up to the pile of stone rubble.

The Stones: The stones appear to have been intentionally piled and arranged so as to provide a stable entrance into an underground chamber. The entrance is fairly small and only an investigator of SIZ 12 or less would be able to squeeze through it. Of course, the stones can be moved out of the way to allow larger investigators into the chamber. A faint smell of decay and an unrecognizable (but very unpleasant) scent wafts from the hole.

The Burrows

The burrows are located under the ruins. Originally, the basement of the tower, the area has been dug out by the Finger-Biters. The interior of the burrows is packed earth, reinforced with chunks of old stone.

1. **Entrance:** The entrance chamber is a dark and foul smelling pit that reeks of flesh, decay, and an unpleasant, but unknown scent. The ceiling of the chamber is five feet above the floor, which will require taller investigators to crouch down.

2. **The Old Well:** The old well leads down into the earth. The well is touch climb and there is still water in it. The finger-Biters will retreat into the well (they do not need to breath) if things go badly. If an investigator goes after the Finger-Biters, he will have to squeeze into the well and climb down. A fall into the well will be dangerous, especially if there are enraged Finger-Biters in the well. At the bottom of the well is an assortment of gold items, such as rings, necklaces and earrings.

3. **Fingers:** The Finger-Biter's keep their fingers here. Right now they only have Clarence finger. The area is strewn with bone fragments from the fingers of the Finger-Biters' victims.

4. Resting Area: The Finger-Biters rest here during the day.

Action

The action begins when the investigators set out to deal with the Finger-Biters.

Visiting the Ruins/Fighting the Finger-Biters

Once the investigators learn about the ruins, they will certainly set out to investigate them. During the day, the Finger-Biters will stay in the ruins. If the investigators come at night, the Finger-Biters will assess them from within the safety of their burrows. If the investigators outnumber them or seem quite dangerous and prepared, the Finger-Biters will not attack. If the investigators seem weak or ill-prepared, the Finger-Biters will dash out and try to take their fingers.

If the investigators enter the burrows, the Finger-Biters will attack them, even during the day. If the battle goes badly for the Finger-Biters, they will retreat into the remains of the old well.

If the Finger-Biters are “killed,” they will rise again the next night, unless the fingers in them are destroyed. If the Finger-Biters rise again, they will be enraged and will go into the village in search of the investigators. If they cannot find them, they will attack some of the villagers they encounter. Reports of these attacks should let the investigators know that they have not defeated the Finger-Biters.

Ian Bannerman

If the investigators do not destroy all the Finger-Biters, they will summon Bannerman. They have a special mental link to him and can let him know when they need him. He will be commanded to kill the investigators.

Bannerman will attempt to ambush or attack the investigators when they are not prepared. For example, if the investigators are staying at the inn he will try to kill them in their sleep.

If the investigators investigate the stories about the attacked prostitutes before going to the ruins, they might end up dealing with Bannerman first. Bannerman is quite cunning and is careful to select only prostitutes as his victims. If confronted, he will try to talk his way out. Failing that he will turn to violence.

Bannerman is quite insane and serves the Finger-Biters with complete devotion.

Conclusion

The adventure ends when the investigators defeat the Finger-Biters or are themselves defeated. If the investigators kill all the Finger-Biters, they should receive a 1D4 Sanity Point reward. MacDougal and the villagers will be grateful and will be willing to aid the investigators in the future.

If the investigators are defeated and flee, they will bear in their hearts the knowledge that they have abandoned their friend and the villagers to the mercy of the Finger-Biters. The shame and the horror should cost the investigators 1D3 Sanity Points.

Clarence MacDougal is a wealthy individual who owns his own plane. Thus, if the investigators are able to help him, he will be in a position to help them as a patron and/or a means of transportation.

NPCs

Clarence MacDougal, Wealthy Traveler

STR: 13 CON:14 SIZ:13 INT:14 POW:12 DEX: 11 APP:13 EDU: 17 SAN:60- HP: 14 DB:+1D4

Description: MacDougal is a man in his thirties. He has black hair and blue eyes. He keeps himself reasonably fit and dresses well. His family is wealthy, thanks to Andrew MacDougal's gold. MacDougal spent most of his youth going from university to university and he eventually graduated with a degree in history. His family wealth enables him to travel at will, which he greatly enjoys. MacDougal is not exceptionally brave and will need the investigators to "stiffen his backbone" so that he will take action.

Important Skills: Accounting 25%, Anthropology 15%, Archaeology 17%, Bargain 31%, Chemistry 14%, Credit Rating 80%, Geology 11%, History 45%, Law 14%, Library Use 42%, Natural History 70%, Occult 43%

David Zuckerman, Assistant to MacDougal

STR: 13 CON:13 SIZ:13 INT:12 POW:13 DEX: 13 APP:12 EDU: 14 SAN: 65 HP: 13 DB:+1D4

Description: Zuckerman is a medium-sized man who radiates an air of quiet confidence, Zuckerman fought in the Great War as both a soldier and, later, as a pilot. After the war he worked as a pilot and was eventually hired by MacDougal. Zuckerman loves to travel and visit strange places and MacDougal's money makes the possible. However, Zuckerman is very fond of MacDougal and feels quite loyal to him. Zuckerman does not believe in the supernatural, but he is a man of action and will aid the investigators.

Important Skills: Bargain 24%, Climb 55%, Dodge 41%, Fast Talk 24%, Jump 45%, Listen 37%, Navigate 44%, German 34%, French 21%, Pilot (Airplane) 64%, Handgun 55%, Rifle 74%, Fist 60%

Ian Bannerman, friend to the Finger Biters

STR: 14 CON:14 SIZ:15 INT:10 POW:11 DEX: 13 APP:10 EDU: 10 SAN: 0 HP: 15 DB:+1D4

Description: Bannerman is a large man who wears a heavy coat and drives a well worn car. He lives outside of the village. Bannerman was traveling salesman until he had the misfortune of becoming a victim of the Finger-Biters. Now he is the insane, but devoted servant of the Finger-Biters. He is cunning and violent and will do anything his masters tell him.

Important Skills: Climb 50%, Fast Talk 21%, Hide 50%, Jump 31%, Fist 62%

Weapons: Hatchet 38% Damage 1D6+1+DB HP 12, Club 49% Damage 1D6+DB HP 15

Mythos Beings

Finger-Biter, Lesser Servitor Race

Finger-Biters are horrid creatures that are the product of vile magic. They are created in a terrible ritual, which is described above. A Finger Biter's body looks like a terrible mixture of rat and human features. The body is oddly shrunk, making it look emaciated. A finger biter has long, grasping fingers that end in small, jagged claws. Their hands look much like human hands and each one has a single finger missing. The head of a finger biter is vaguely human, but the jaws are elongated and occupied by four sharp, chisel like teeth and several small, but wicked looking, gnawing teeth. The eyes seem to be malign embers burning in deep sockets. The entire creature seems to be oddly mummified, with bones sticking out through the dry and withered flesh.

They can attack by biting and clawing. If they make an attack roll equal to 20% of their biting skill, they have struck their victim's finger. The victim must match POW with the Finger-Biter. If the roll fails, the Finger-Biter takes the victim's finger. Once a Finger-Biter has a finger, it will attempt to flee with it. Finger-Biters have no interest in killing their victims, since they have something very special in mind.

Once a Finger-Biter gets a finger, it will take it to its lair or some other suitable place. There it will gnaw and worry the finger. The magic used in the creation of the horror enables a Finger-Biter to form a mental link to it's victim through the finger. Each day, the Finger-Biter can match its POW against its victim. If the Finger-Biter wins, the victim will experience terrible pain, as if his finger were still attached to his body as the Finger-Biter gnaws and tears at it. A victim so affected needs to make a Sanity Roll each time. A failed roll costs the victim 1 Sanity point, while a successful roll results in no loss. The pain also distracts the victim, giving him a -5% on all skill rolls. Most horribly, the Finger-Biter can keep gnawing the finger even after it has been reduced to bone. The Finger-Biter can use a single finger for up to thirty days, until there is nothing left of it. At that point, the victim is free. A victim can also be freed by destroying the Finger-Biter that took his finger or recovering the finger. A recovered finger can be reclaimed by the Finger-Biter. Only the Finger-Biter who took the finger can use it, so the owner can destroy it without any pain or harm.

Finger-Biters are a form of undead creature and, as such, are not very vulnerable to conventional weapons. Impaling weapons, such as firearms, do only 1 point of damage. All other conventional weapons do half damage.

Finger-Biters do not heal normally. However, the magic that created them preserves them. As long as the finger used in its creation remains intact, a Finger-Biter will regenerate completely when the sun sets again. The only way to permanently destroy a Finger-Biter is to destroy the finger. The finger will be almost as solid as stone and will take a number of hits points to destroy as the creature has POW points.

The Finger-Biters in this adventure are, of course, the MacDougal family. A close look at them will reveal that their features, as horrid as they are, bear a faint but clear resemblance to Clarence MacDougal. The creatures also have rings that have the Macdougal family crest on them. Realizing that these creatures were once the

MacDougals costs 0/1 points of Sanity.

Characteristics	Rolls	Averages	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5
STR	2D6	7	8	7	10	6	5
CON	3D6	10-11	13	12	13	13	8
SIZ	2D6	7	8	10	12	7	5
INT	2D6	7	7	6	9	12	5
POW	3D6	12	13	11	14	13	10
DEX	4D6	14	16	19	17	13	19
HP		9	11	11	13	10	7
Damage Bonus		-1D4	-1D4	0	0	-1D4	-1D6

Move: 8

Weapons: Bite 40% Damage 1D4+ Special, Claw 20% 1D3+db

Armor: None, but impaling weapons do 1 point of damage and all other conventional weapons do only half damage.

Spells: None.

Sanity Loss: 0/1D4 Sanity Points to see a Finger-Biter

Handouts

-Handout #1, MacDougal's Letter

Dear x,

I hope this letter finds you well. I apologize in advance for my brevity, but the pain I am suffering moves me to get right to the point.

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Sincerely,

Clarence MacDougal

Maps

