

# CAN'T SLEEP—CLOWNS WILL EAT ME

AN ADVENTURE LOCATION BY STEPHANIE BRYANT—DRAWN BY MICHAEL PRESCOTT

## THE SITUATION

The folk of Juniper's Crossing haven't slept since the *Circus Adventicus* came to town, three weeks ago. They are scared, paranoid, and more than a little deranged.

The people here will say nonsensical things, wander off mid-conversation, and may have vibrant hallucinations. These present themselves as illusionary threats due to the curse's nature.

Adventurers cannot benefit from rest or sleep. Anyone staying here for more than three days will suffer from acute exhaustion and hallucinations. Even sleep-inducing magic lasts half as long as normal, and provides no rest.

This is caused by the *Dream Eater*, a powerful monster hiding among the circus performers.

## BROKEN INN

Gus Broken runs this ordinary tavern with a few rooms to rent to weary travelers. The Inn is running low on ale and spirits, however, as townfolk try to drink themselves to sleep. The common room holds 2-12 townsfolk in various

states of inebriation. Arguments and fights are common.

## HARLO THE MIME

Among the patrons is hard-drinking Harlo, former assassin, now a circus mime. The *Dream Eater's* magic has made his invisible, mimed walls real.

## MILLER'S MADNESS

Local farmers patronize Abigail's mill, which has a near-monopoly in the area. Abigail's illusions include shadows crawling along the walls, being watched, and tiny insects in the grain.

## BAKER'S DOZE-ING

The smell of warm bread has a damp undercurrent of mold. Braided bread is shaped into weird and unsettling contortions and sculptures which seem to writhe when not watched directly.

## LEAVEN FARM

Jacob Leaven's family farm grows wheat and has a small herd of dairy goats.

With 7 kids, it's a big family; Angie is one of the middle children.

Jacob is a 40 year-old farmer, and his terror of harquins and clowns is the original source of the insomnia.

Lack of sleep has amplified Jacob's fear, and the *Dream Eater* has spread it like a cancer throughout the village, and used the resulting anxiety and hallucinations of the villagers and circus performers to further torment them.

## SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Portia Oskrey usually lets people manage their own problems, and she really wants this one to go away. She hasn't figured it out on her own, and the longer she goes without sleep, the less inclined she is to try. She'll gladly accept help and will reward those who bring any offenders in for justice.

## CIRCUS ADVENTICUS

The Circus Adventicus boasts the *Laboratory of Mysteries* and the *Museum of Mechanical Monstrosities* as its main attractions, but it employs the standard complement of jugglers, clowns, side shows, and other attractions as well. A *Big Top* performance ran every night until 3 days ago, when

the crew simply lacked the strength to keep performing.

## BIG TOP

Once exciting, this large tent is a sad, flapping reminder of better days. Weather and neglect have left it with several holes in the canvas, though the performers had tried, until recently, to continue to stage nightly shows. Now, they perform every other night, and no longer perform the animal acts.

## CAPTAIN WONDROUS

The circus ringleader and occasional performer sits sullenly in big top. He hallucinates constantly, his eyes darting to imagined movement in the dark.

## HESPIBAH THE HUGE

Once a gladiator in Owlshade, the animal-loving circus strongman often wanders away randomly, mid-task.

## MUSEUM OF MONSTROSITIES

Mechanical clanking and the smell of oil and smoke surround this bright orange tent, which houses **Archibald's** numerous **mechanical oddities** and contraptions. The gnome-like tinkerer's creations have become increasingly hostile and uncontrolled.



## d10 Illusionary Encounters

|    |                                  |
|----|----------------------------------|
| 1  | 1d3 scary harlequins             |
| 2  | 1d2 escaped lions                |
| 3  | 1d6 hallucinated shadows         |
| 4  | A villager, turned into a ghoul  |
| 5  | Carnival barker                  |
| 6  | Automaton from the <i>Museum</i> |
| 7  | A villager, twice normal size    |
| 8  | Mad wizard                       |
| 9  | 1d6 berzerker acrobats           |
| 10 | 1d3 malicious clowns             |

### LABORATORY OF MAD WIZARDS

Three wagons are connected side by side to form a single, large open room for performing feats of magic and illusion, performed by the three “Mad Wizards,” who were not actually mad before the *Dream Eater*.

### BEAUTIFUL BESTIARY

A sign outside this circle of cages indicates the attraction is closed. Several cages have been draped to hide the animals inside. Some cages are empty. At least one is empty, the door obviously broken. The other cages contain:

**The Harpy**—a large eagle, many of whose feathers have been plucked

**The Mermaid**—a tank of water containing a sea horse

**The Great Serpent**—a large constrictor snake, currently ill tempered due to shedding

**Grand Oliphant**—a bored elephant

**Dancing Rats**—a swarm of trained rats, now ravenously hungry

The **animal tamer**, ‘Grover of the Grovers’ sits amid the cages, catatonic from days of insomnia.

### MERCADO

Non-performers sell wares in the Mercado, where visitors can purchase

Circus Adventicus mementos, temporary low-grade illusions, food and beverage, and the services of Mother Fortunada.

Visitors can also play (rigged) carnival games to win tiny pets (fish, mice) or other prizes. A squirrely merchant sells “potions of sleep” to desperate villagers and circus folk alike.

### MADAME FORTUNADA

The elderly fortune teller’s divination magics always reveal a little too much.

### BACK OF THE HOUSE

A collection of tents and wagons where the circus performers live, sleep, and eat. Arranged in a large circle around the common cook fire and mess table.

### JOCKO THE JONGLEUR

Head of the juggling troupe, Jocko loves stupid jokes. The others have tired of

his delirious laughter, so he paces outside the circle of wagons.

### MIRROR MAZE

This large temporary building houses a maze of distorting mirrors, in which it is easy to become lost or disoriented. The *Dream Eater* has taken up residence inside, and its presence has attracted 2 pair of **doppelgangers** and their **mimic** pet. As visitors move through the maze, they see themselves reflected in an altered form:

- Enormously large
- As a harlequin or clown
- Extremely beautiful (this mirror is actually is the mimic)
- As normal, but your shadow moves menacingly behind you!
- A different profession, species, or social status
- As a ghoul
- Without a face

# TRILEMMA ADVENTURES

These mirror images are then projected as illusions by the Dream Eater, as shown in the Illusionary Encounters table.

Unlucky visitors will be attacked or harassed by the mimic or by a doppelganger adopting one of the distorted forms. Anyone who spends too long looking into the mirrors attracts the attention of the doppelgangers or the Dream Eater itself!

The villagers will assume any wild tales of monsters are hallucinations caused by the madness.

### THE DREAM EATER

A powerful psychic monster lurks among the circus performers. In its natural form, it appears as a dense cloud of darkness with glints of tiny metal spikes and the sound of something smacking its teeth.

With a manipulative and deceptive nature and resistance to mind-affecting magics, it is a challenging foe and can be anywhere in the Circus or harassing the town. It makes its lair in the Mirror Maze.

Its sole drive is to sow confusion and to heighten the village’s fear, paranoia, and madness. It has three powers:

- **Mimic:** Appear as anyone who has gone through the Mirror Maze
- **Amplify:** Amplify another’s emotional state so others can feel it.
- **Hallucinate:** Cause someone’s hallucinations to manifest as illusions experienced by everyone.

The Dream Eater bears a crown made of sharp metal teeth that prick the wearer’s forehead. The wearer can project powerful illusions for a short period of time, but doing so takes a mental toll.

