

HOPE YOU LITTLE LUNATICS HAVE SOME LIGHTS 'CAUSE I'M TAKING YOU BACK TO THE DARK AGES IN THIS **HORROR HOEDOWN** OF GRUESOME GOINGS-ON UNDER THE OMINOUS SHADOW OF A FEARFUL STONE IMAGE KNOWN AS A...

GARGOYLE



NIGHT'S BLACK SHADOWS FLOOD THE NARROW TWISTING STREETS OF 13TH CENTURY PARIS SENDING THE POPULACE FEARFULLY TO THEIR HOMES...FOR THIS IS A DARK PERIOD IN MAN'S HISTORY...PESTILENCE, FAMINE AND WAR STALK THE LAND...AND OFT-TIMES, DURING NIGHT'S DREAD STILLNESS, THINGS FAR MORE HIDEOUS!

AIEEEEEEE!



THIS WAS A TIME OF GREAT SUPERSTITION AND GREATER FEAR. MEN HUNGERED FOR KNOWLEDGE AND SEARCHED FOR IT IN EVIL PLACES WITH CORRUPTED MEANS... GRASPING AND CLAWING FOR ANY DARK SECRET THAT MIGHT SERVE THE TERRIBLE DRIVING OF AMBITION, POWER, OR...**GREED**...



ANGRILY HE STALKED OUT OF THE TOWER ROOM HAUNTED BY VISIONS OF DAZZLING YELLOW METAL JUST BEYOND HIS GRASP... THE SECRET OF UNLIMITED WEALTH WAITING SOMEWHERE... *SOMEWHERE*

I'M NOT GETTING ANYWHERE... MUST FIND A NEW APPROACH! SO MUCH NOISE FROM THE STREET... SOUNDS LIKE A CROWD GATHERING!



WHAT'S THE EXCITEMENT? WHAT'S HAPPENING?

A FUNERAL! LAST NIGHT THE BARON DE WALDE WAS SLAIN!



BY SOMETHING MONSTROUS! A DEMON'S WORK!

THE CROWD SURGED FORWARD AS THE PROCESSION OF PRIESTS, MOURNERS AND DIGNITARIES MADE ITS WAY BY... SOLEMN PROOF FOR THE MASSES THAT EVEN THOSE OF POWER AND AFFLUENCE WERE NOT IMMUNE TO THE DISASTERS OF THE TIMES...

HERE'S ONE THAT ISN'T MOURNING! GERBA THE DWARF... SCULPTOR OF GARGOYLES!



HEE, HEE...

SCULPTOR! HOW IS IT THE BARON'S FUNERAL PUTS YOU IN SUCH GOOD HUMOR?

GOOD MORNING, VALDEUX! WHY NOT LAUGH? THE BARON STRONGLY OPPOSED MY GARGOYLES DECORATING THE BELL TOWER... WITHOUT HIS CRITICISM, MY CREATIONS ARE SAFE! HA, HA, HA, HA!

WHO DARES!? WHO FINDS JOY IN THE LAST RITES OF MY FRIEND?

THE MARQUIS!





GERBA! YOU TOAD!
UGLIER THAN YOUR OWN
GARGOYLES! I MIGHT
HAVE KNOWN! SEE
HOW FUNNY YOU
FIND A HIDING!

N-NOOOO!

LOOKING AT THE BATTERED
MISSHAPPENED FORM ON
THE COBBLESTONES, SOME-
THING STIRRED IN THE BACK
OF VALDEUX'S MIND...SOME-
THING HEARD YEARS AGO...
AN ANCIENT TEACHING...



UHHHHH!

EASY, MY FRIEND!
LET ME HELP YOU
TO YOUR HOME!



THROUGH THE
SQUALOR OF
PARIS'S POOREST
SECTION, THE
ALCHEMIST
GUIDED THE
BEATEN DWARF...
WHILE WORDS
CAME BACK TO
HIM OF THE
STRANGE POWERS
OF LITTLE PEOPLE;
DWARFS WERE
BORN WITH
OCCULT ABILITIES!

...SO WE LEARNED
AT THE UNIVERSITY IN
NAPLES...WHY NOT
THE ABILITY TO
CREATE GOLD!

HERE, GERBA...
YOU'RE HOME!

THANK YOU,
VALDEUX!
I FEEL
BETTER NOW!
AH! MY LATEST
CREATION!



THE SACRED BOOK OF
BLACK ARTS! YOU KNOW
OF IT'S USES, GERBA?

IT HAS IT'S
APPLICATIONS
IN MY WORK...
COME! SEE MY
MASTERPIECE!



SEE! NOT QUITE
FINISHED... BUT
ALREADY MY CROWNING
ACHIEVEMENT!

STRIKING...
ALMOST REAL...

HE *MUST* KNOW!
I HAVE TO GET
HIM TO REVEAL
THE SECRET!
GOLD! MINE
TO CREATE!



AND THESE! DO YOU DABBLE IN MY FIELD OF SCIENCE, GERBA?

I DO ANYTHING THAT HELPS ME WITH MY ART!

DESPERATELY VALDEUX'S EYES SCANNED THE TABLE FOR SOME HINT... SOME CLUE...SOME SIGN...THAT **HERE** WAS THE ANSWER! THEN SOMETHING GLEAMED YELLOW AND BRIGHT AMONG THE BEAKERS AND CHEMICALS...



AND THIS! IS THIS PART OF YOUR ART, GERBA?

SOMETIMES... BUT REALLY, VALDEUX, IT IS ONLY MY SCULPTURE THAT CONCERNS ME!



THE ALCHEMIST GRIMACED, ALMOST HATING THE LOOMING STONE MONSTROSITY...THERE SEEMED TO BE NO WAY TO GET THROUGH TO THE STOREHOUSE OF WONDERS BARRACADED BEHIND THE DISTORTED DWARF FACE THAT WOULD BETRAY NO SECRETS...

DOESN'T THE MARQUIS' WRATH CONCERN YOU, GERBA? HE IS A POWERFUL MAN...

SO WAS THE BARON! PERHAPS THE MARQUIS SHOULD HAVE CHOSEN MORE WISELY WHOM HE WHIPPED!



A RASH MOVE CAN BE COSTLY... EVEN TO A MARQUIS!

TRUE, GERBA, TRUE!

SO I'LL PROCEED CAUTIOUSLY WITH YOU... UNTIL I LEARN YOUR SECRET!

AGAIN DARKNESS BLANKETED THE CITY...AND COUPLED WITH THE BARON'S GHASTLY DEATH LENT SUCH A SPELL OF TERROR, NONE DARE SET FOOT TO THE COBBLESTONES... EXCEPT THOSE MOTIVATED BY EVEN STRONGER PURPOSE...



SO! MIDNIGHT JOURNEYS...LEAD ON, SCULPTOR!

EXCITEMENT MOUNTED IN VALDEUX AS HE STOLE SILENTLY FROM SHADOW TO SHADOW AFTER THE WIZEN FIGURE...

MOMENTARILY VALDEUX DEBATED FOLLOWING THE DWARF INTO THE BUILDING... THEN, NEAR THE TOP OF THE TOWER ORNAMENTED WITH GERBA'S OWN GROTESQUE CREATIONS...



THE GREAT BELL TOWER! WHAT WILL HE DO IN THERE?



IT'S HIM! UP BY THE GARGOYLE... BENDING CLOSE... AS THOUGH HE MIGHT EVEN BE WHISPERING TO IT...

A CHILL KNIFED THROUGH VALDEUX AS HE STIFLED A SCREAM... STONE MELTED AND THE NIGHT WIND HOWLED WITH THE *HIDEOUS EVIL* LAUNCHING ITSELF INTO THE AIR!...

VALDEUX RACED BACK THROUGH THE DESERTED STREETS, HIS EVERY THOUGHT SCHEMING TOWARD THE COMING DAY... WHILE ELSEWHERE, TERRIBLE DEATH WINGED TOWARD AN APPOINTMENT...



I-IT'S ALL TRUE! THE DWARF HAS OCCULT POWERS... I CAN GAIN THE SECRET OF GOLD CONVERSION! TOMORROW...



...TO DENY FOREVER TO THE MARQUIS ANY MORE COMING DAYS!..



EEEEEE-YAHHHH!

THE MORNING SUN BROUGHT TWO SMILING FACES TO WITNESS A FUNERAL PROCESSION...



THE TAVERN WAS COOL AND DARK, AS WAS THE WINE...WHICH VALDEUX KEPT COMING IN STEADY SUPPLY TO THE SMALL DISTORTED FIGURE OPPOSITE HIM...



THE DWARFS CAPACITY WAS NOT GREAT... AND THE WINE SOON WAS HAVING THE EFFECT VALDEUX DESIRED...

HIS PULSE SLAMMING SLEDGE-HAMMER STROKES IN EVERY VEIN, THE ALCHEMIST ALMOST CARRIED GERBA THROUGH THE MAZE OF PARIS STREETS TO THE DWARF'S HOME...AND THE ANSWER!



GIGGLING DRUNKENLY, GERBA STAGGERED TO THE TABLE OF CHEMICALS WHERE VALDEUX HAD FIRST SEEN THE PIECES OF GOLD WHICH SEEMED MORE IMPORTANT NOW THAT HE WAS ON THE VERGE OF THE ANSWER, THAN EVER BEFORE...

NO,..NOT GOLD... YOU FOUR ON STONE... OF COURSE! AND THE STONE TURNS...YOU'VE SHOWN ME ENOUGH, GERBA!



THANK YOU, GERBA,
THANK YOU!
THANK YOU!



GURGHhhh!

VALDEUX GRIPPED THE BEAKER
TIGHTLY WITH TREMBLING HANDS,
STARING WILDLY AROUND...

STONE INTO GOLD!
THIS IS THE BIGGEST
PIECE OF STONE
AROUND...



HARDLY HAD THE STRANGE LIQUID SPILLED ONTO
THE ROCK THAN VALDEUX WISHED IT BACK IN THE
BEAKER... THE FINELY CHISELED STONE QUIVERED,
THEN MOVED, THEN LEAPED INTO LIFE!

THE WEIGHT OF STONE AND THE FURY OF
FLESH SENT VALDEUX CRASHING BACK-
WARD WITH UNHUMAN FORCE!... POOR
DRUNKEN GERBA HAD MISUNDERSTOOD...
HAD NEVER KNOWN HOW TO CREATE
GOLD... THE GOLD WAS ONLY ONE OF
THE INGREDIENTS IN THE FLUID THE
DWARF USED TO BRING HIS GARGOYLES
TO LIFE! NOW WITH DEATH AT HIS
THROAT, EVEN VALDEUX UNDERSTOOD!



NO! NO!
NYAHhhh!



YOU MIGHT SAY VALDEUX FINALLY GOT IT...
BUT GOOD! IF THIS ENDING LEAVES YOU
WITH A DRY THROAT, THEN YOU BETTER
RUN OUT AND GARGOYLE! BUT DON'T
DRINK ANYTHING TO GET YOU STONED!