

Nestled on the outskirts of a wealthy city district, this drab unassuming stone structure gives little outside indication of its contents. A bronze plaque above the double door entrance reads: "Museum of Infamous Heroism." For over 35 years, curator Galdor Vorac has collected and preserved objects belonging to the most nefarious individuals throughout history. The museum is funded by donations from the city and from visitors. Vorac is the sole worker and proprietor and has committed all of the relics' histories to memory. On days of pleasant weather, the human curator can be seen in the museum's small yard giving historical lectures or answering questions about his newest acquisition.

Area Details

The museum is protected by stone walls and a set of locked wooden double doors at its entrance. Curator Vorac pays a weekly fee to a trusted local wizard to nightly lay protective arcane dweomers across the doors and the skylight (see Area 3).

AREA 1: THE YARD

Square stones form a semicircle around the southern side of the museum. Holes in the squat pillars allow for two rows of wooden slats to form a fence around several wooden benches. A single gate to the southeast (locked at night) swings inward onto a gravel path that cuts a swath through carefully tended grass. Next to the museum wall, a flower bed sports a rainbow of foreign flowers and plants which seem to thrive no matter the weather. Vorac imports seasonal plants throughout the year for the sake of squeamish visitors (who may only be here at a friend's request). "First impressions and all that," Vorac once stated.

Weather permitting, Vorac lectures here during the second and fifth days of the week just after noon. "While your stomachs digest their meals," he always begins, "let me give your minds something to chew on as well." Topics of lecture always focus on the sordid past of one of the objects within the museum and how it found its way to his establishment. The tale is

sometimes embellished with song, prestidigitation, or both. After the lecture, Vorac leads the crowd (which usually numbers seven to ten) inside to see the item for themselves. Occasionally, the curator allows other persons to perform short plays or songs if they have relevance to one or more of his exhibits. When they do occur, these special events are held on the third day of the week.

The benches allow comfortable seating for up to a dozen humanoids of average size. Vorac lectures from a wooden podium he keeps in the storage room (see Area 6). In case of danger, a hidden compartment in the podium's base hides a magical dagger as well as a scroll able to call forth magical paralyzation. Beside the podium is a small wooden table holding light refreshments of wine and cheese.

AREA 2: FOYER

Tiled in white-gray marble (like the rest of the museum), this entrance chamber is the most common area in which to encounter Vorac. During business hours, he sits behind the desk at the northern wall reviewing paperwork concerning items he either already has in his possession or is attempting to procure. The curator has contacts throughout the world and expects status reports from them on a monthly basis as they search for new objects of value. The locked desk drawer also contains an accounting notebook wherein the finances of the museum are detailed. The entrance fee is 5 gold pieces per person and all visitors are encouraged to write their name and city and/or region of origin in a logbook on the desk. The east wall sports two dozen iron decorative hooks from which to hang traveling cloaks or coats. A long table hugs the west wall and is littered with cheap maps of the city's business district as well as pamphlets listing the museum's current roster of exhibits. A finely rendered map of the known world is encased in a glass frame and hangs at eye level (for a human) above the table.

AREA 3: MAIN EXHIBIT HALL

The largest chamber in the building, this hall's natural lighting is superb because of the glass skylight above. The skylight is kept locked and magically warded (a damaging and paralyzing electrical burst) at all times but Vorac feels that the most valuable pieces currently in the museum deserve the best lighting. Although some visitors fear fading of the artifacts from the sunlight, Vorac winks and assures them that the glass each exhibit is contained within magically protects the contents from the sun's rays. Below are the artifacts currently residing here, the italicized titles being prominently displayed on metal plaques at the display bases.

"Portrait of Genocide"

This oil painting depicts bound demihumans being thrown into a raging bonfire. The next to be tossed in the painting is an elven infant raised high by a triumphant looking human in long judge-like black robes.

Vorac says: "This work captures the most heinous crime perpetrated by Lord Davryn—an inquisition of all non-humans within his kingdom. Davryn's agents acted openly in the lands to slay demihumans who, the Lord publicly stated, continued to bring misfortune to his lands. Regrettably, Davryn's power was great and the mass murders continued for some months before a coalition of other countries decided to intervene. Davryn is rumored to have died during a siege on his fortress, Castle Blackhold; although those same rumors warn that the ghosts of the Lord and his personal guard still haunt its ruins. Fortunately, this painting did not similarly perish and serves as a reminder to all generations to never let such an agent of hate gain power again. The artist is unknown but is likely to be one of three artisans kept on hand by Davryn to create pro-human propaganda."

"War-mask of Opeem"

A small ivory mask bearing a draconic visage. A faint red stain surrounds the chipped right ear on the otherwise green-painted front. The rear is reinforced by a fine steel mesh.

Vorac says: "Now you might wonder why this mask has such openness around the nose area. That would be because it was neither made for, nor worn by, humans. In fact, this war-mask was the most recognized possession of the kobold emperor Opeem. Also called the "sorcerer-king," Opeem triumphantly conquered the southeast region of today's civilized realm with his kobold legions. No one is quite sure what led to the kobold nation's disintegration but you're not likely to find an answer by asking its descendants. The name of this renowned emperor is still known in today's kobold society but is reserved for only the most powerful of their kind. On the other hand, particularly inept kobolds are saddled with that name except spelled backwards."

"The Hound of Li'Xin"

Just under five feet tall at the shoulder, this feral dog-like creature has a pelt of red-black fur and deep purple eyes. The monster's snout is pulled back in a perpetual snarl, showing blackened but sharp teeth.

Vorac says: "Given to the demon-princess Li'Xin as a pet by a now unknown demonic suitor, this hell hound was the infernal mistress' constant companion and guardian. Li'Xin established herself as a quasi-deity some two centuries back, ruling over a cult of demon worshippers comprised of high-ranking nobles and business owners. The cult's symbol was the hell hound itself, which the demon-princess sent to slay the group's enemies; and occasionally its members when one or more would stray from the fold. When adventurers disbanded the cult and slew Li'Xin, this hell hound managed to be slain last. Those who know of the lost cult still sometimes visit the stuffed hound here to superstitiously pray for favor for an upcoming venture."

“Medallion of the Seven Suns”

As wide as a human palm, this gold medallion bears a flame engraved on one side and a sun on the other.

Vorac says: “Much like the Hound of Li’Xin artifact over there, this medallion also involves an evil cult. Calling themselves the Seven Suns, this ruthless cabal of pyromaniacs attempted to blanket the world in fire. Legend has it that this medallion will one day be taken up by the “holy one” and used to open the seven temples the cult hid around the world. When the temples have all been found and touched by the medallion, the Great Conflagration will occur. My research indicates that the holy one mentioned in the legend will have some kind of connection to the Plane of Fire in his or her lineage. Surprisingly, the downfall of the cult actually broadened the knowledge of planar mechanics at the time. It seems that each of the cult’s temples is built upon a special location which is particularly susceptible to planar penetration, in this case, the Plane of Fire. Most are in inhospitable locales and have been forgotten by all but the most dogged historians.”

AREA 4: HALL OF LOCAL ARTIFACTS

The exhibits in this room can trace their origins within 50 miles of the museum. As in the main hall, all exhibits are protected under glass cases. Two windows and three torches along the west wall stand ready to provide illumination at any time of day.

“Figurines of Galdanian”

A few inches in height, these five figurines are exquisitely detailed replicas of human males and females in wedding garments.

Vorac says: “Named for their creator, Galdanian Mezros, these porcelain fragments represent the crafter’s last work. Before rings became the customary

symbol of marriage, couples traded small figures which represented their own souls. Sometimes these fragile items were crafted by the groom and bride themselves but more often the pieces were commissioned by the couple together. Galdanian lived but a few blocks away about a century ago and it was known throughout the city that he only crafted these wedding figurines in the spring; devoting the rest of the year to his other larger works. At the time of his death, he was still one bride short of the three commissioned sets. The couples all had made only partial payments to Galdanian and, for reasons still not known, his eldest son refused to complete the transactions after taking possession of his father’s estate. The money was returned to the couples and the five figurines were willed to the museum. I know that the families, even now a couple generations later, would still like to have these items of the renowned artisan in their collections.”

“Bust of the Slasher”

White stone sculpture of the head and shoulders of a bearded human with balding pate.

Vorac says: “This bust is an uncanny likeness of high priest Ilsav Midouri. He was the ranking cleric of the goddess of harvests some years ago. His small shrine, now abandoned, still sits in a swampy section of the forest just off the west road out of the city here. Ilsav was a constant companion to the local farmers until something changed him. Some maddening force took hold of the priest on nights of the new moon which sent him out of the shrine to slay a member of a random farmhouse with his holy sickle. After Ilsav’s capture, trial, and execution, the local farmers formed a militia from their own families to make routine rounds of the rural area outside the city. That militia still exists today and has been officially endorsed by the city council to the point where free training in arms is available to interested persons. As for Ilsav’s shrine, his few followers tried to burn the place once they learned what had been happening. The shrine, however, refused to fall and supernatural causes are named for its survival. The gutted remains of the place still stand with this bust being the only item

rescued from the scene in honor of the man it represented before his descent into madness.”

“Earring of Madam Violet”

A diamond earring made of gold sits atop a red velvet pillow.

Vorac says: “This particular piece of jewelry belonged to the owner/operator of the city’s primary brothel some fifty years ago. Her, ahem, *establishment* might have escaped notice for longer than it had but the madam was conducting more than the usual brothel business. Her stable of fifteen ladies could perform far more than bedroom tricks, for each was also a skilled killer. The eventual unmasking of these assassin-whores and their madam paved the way for today’s legalized prostitution. At least that way, the ladies can better be kept an eye on and the city is able to tax them! Madam Violet’s name can still be heard invoked in the more seedy taverns when serving wenches curse harassing patrons. The lasses ask the lady’s ghost to shrivel the men’s privates in her icy grip.”

AREA 5: CHAMBER OF MYSTERIES

The three exhibits in this area are no less interesting than the other items in the museum but all share the commonality of having histories that end in a mystery. Two windows and three torches along the north wall stand ready to provide illumination at any time of day.

“The Obelisk of Reoth”

A seven-foot tall onyx rectangular column topped by a cracked pyramidal stone. Uniform chains of runes run the length of the column’s four sides.

Vorac says: “Reoth was a dwarven community which disappeared some centuries ago. When one of

the city’s routine trading runs returned early, the mystified merchants told a strange tale of flashing lights and a deep rumbling in the earth where the city formerly stood. This obelisk is all that remained, which in itself would be strange enough, except that the merchants confirmed that this artifact had never been seen in the city previously. Neither I nor my colleagues have been able to translate the inscriptions.”

“Dagger of the Shadowlord”

A rusty dagger is displayed within a velvet-lined wooden case. Despite the obvious deterioration of the steel, a stylized “S” is visible on the blade.

Vorac says: “This weapon was wielded by the legendary crime figure known only as the Shadowlord. This person of extreme secrecy is rumored to have controlled all thieving guilds along the realm’s eastern coast. The dagger was used to mark the lord’s lieutenants as well as the organization’s enemies by removal of the left pinky and right index fingers, respectively. After adventurers successfully infiltrated the guild infrastructure and caused its destruction, this dagger was used to slit the throat of every one of those heroes. The Shadowlord was never caught nor his or her appearance ever successfully recorded. Since the weapon came into the museum’s possession over two decades ago, I’m more than pleased that no one has come to claim it.”

“Ashes of Xatt”

A plain bronze urn topped by an emerald studded lid.

Vorac says: “The cunning sorcerer-thief, Hefferin Xatt, was a master of deception. His feats of legerdemain are the stuff of tavern talk even today. The half-elf’s greatest accomplishment was the disappearance of King Dracen’s crown after he managed to steal it off the monarch’s own head! Now, since rulership of that small nation was and is, by law, permissible only with ownership of the age-old crown, the hunt for Xatt was swift. After cornering the sorcerer-thief at his cliff-side abode, witnesses say he voluntarily engulfed his home and himself in a fiery explosion

rather than be taken into custody. When the king's agents combed the ruins for the crown, no trace could be found. Xatt's body, or at least *a* body, was given to the spellcaster's family which they, in turn, reduced to fine ash and placed into this urn. But was it really Xatt's body that was recovered and where did the crown disappear to? And just why would Xatt perform such a bold, yet glaringly foolish, theft? To this day, adventurers are paid by the current regent of that nation to find the answers to these questions."

AREA 6: STORAGE ROOM

No windows provide daytime illumination for this mostly locked chamber. As mentioned in Area 1, Vorac keeps his speech podium here when not in use. It sits next to other mundane equipment such as a few torches, wood and tools to affect repairs on the outside benches, cleaning accessories which are used nightly, and most notably a medium size treasure chest. A very good quality lock protects the coins and gems inside the chest which comprise Vorac's "petty cash." While the curator also keeps stashes of currency elsewhere, he likes to have a goodly amount on hand for impulse buys or for any unexpected additions to his collection ("One never knows when history will strike!").

Curator Galdor Vorac

Description: This human male is just over six feet in height with a lithe frame and angular features. His most noteworthy feature is a pair of wide green eyes that sit above a confident and friendly smile. Vorac's charismatic voice fairly sings when talking about his museum pieces but can become deadly serious when threatened. A gray surcoat hangs to just below waist level where a short sword hangs easily whenever Vorac is away from the museum (although it is not far away when he *is* at the museum). His normal outfit is a white shirt beneath the coat tucked neatly into a

pair of blue-trimmed gray pants that end in black boots.

Attitude: Vorac is willing to talk about his museum's items whether at work or out on the town. He is confident in his knowledge (having committed to memory all knowledge gained in pursuit of his objects) and in his ability to handle himself in a fight. Above all, he established the museum as a vehicle to get others interested in the world around them; particularly the ever-present world of danger that surrounds them. Vorac believes that the objects he gathers represent threats that got too far and only when evil deeds had already occurred did heroes rise up to meet the challenge. Vorac knows he could easily approach the subject by displaying items belonging to the heroes but that doesn't quite grab the attention of common folk as does "taboo" objects wielded by evil ones. "It's part thrill-seeking and part curiosity that will attract folk," Vorac explained to the city council when asking to establish the museum. "After a murderer is brought to justice, which would you recall more vividly—the sword of the constable who captured him or the bloodstained dagger he used to kill his victims?"

Combat: Well versed in bardcraft, Vorac can inspire heroics in companions or wield moderate arcane magic in a fight. He is also an accomplished master of lore which has further strengthened the power of his bardic talents. The curator is no stranger to a short sword and keeps a few magical trinkets at his disposal. Aside from his natural quickness, Vorac is protected by a slim pair of magical bracers hidden beneath his surcoat. When at the museum, Vorac avoids combat when at all possible to keep his precious exhibits from being damaged. Outside the museum, the human still prefers to keep combat at a distance, providing bardic inspiration or spell use in a support capacity.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

The first obvious idea for an adventure is that somehow, one of the artifacts has been stolen. Maybe someone has finally claimed the Shadowlord's Dagger or perhaps a kobold strike force has taken possession of Opeem's Mask. No matter which item is missing, Vorac turns not to the limited resources of local law enforcement but to experienced adventurers. The resulting chase might be one adventure or a whole string of adventures as the thieves make their way across the land to secure their prize. Is the chase by the PCs anticipated? If so, you can bet anyone cunning enough to escape with a museum relic will have set an equally cunning trap for pursuers.

Besides the artifacts themselves, the museum is a haven for information, even if it is information of a particular stripe—historical. The scope of Vorac's knowledge goes far beyond the museum's relics. When the characters encounter a riddle or other conundrum for which history might hold the answer, they can seek the curator's aid. But a possible new artifact for the museum has just come to light and the payment for information is the recovery of this newest interest which, naturally, lies within a dusty old tomb or dungeon not two days walk from the city.

When a visiting dwarf collapses next to the Obelisk of Reoth, Vorac immediately sends for a healer. But when the dwarf refuses to awaken and it's seen that his eyes and tongue have turned completely pitch-black, Vorac next calls for his wizard ally to scry the area where the obelisk once sat: the lost dwarven community of Reoth. The PCs are hired to investigate what the wizard saw. A second identical obelisk now sits in the huge cavern but it glows with some kind of eldritch energies. Does this signify the return of Reoth or the arrival of the forces responsible for its disappearance? Either scenario would grant a solution to one of the region's greatest mysteries and Vorac wants the PCs to be there for the answer.