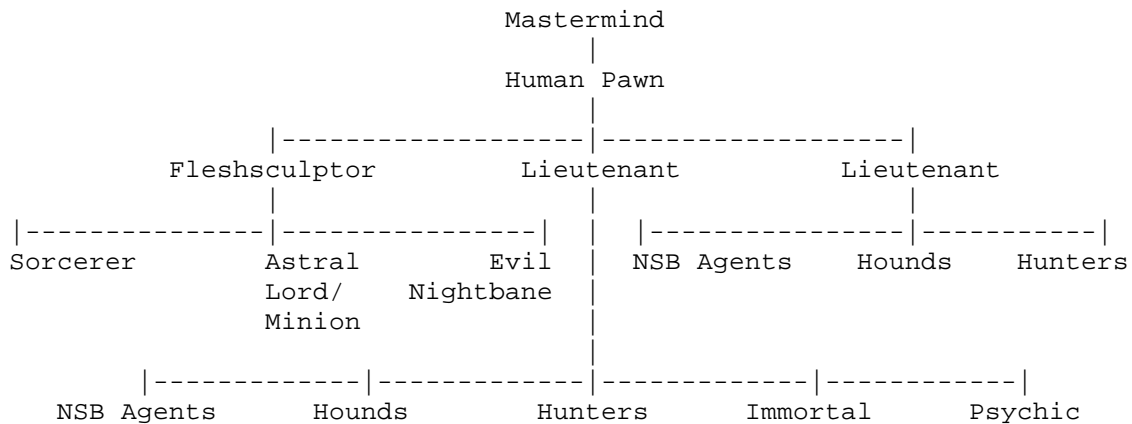


# The Devil Came to Miami



## Plot

The player characters are members of the Seekers faction (or have been hired by the Seekers) to solve a most puzzling murder. A high-ranking member was murdered in his sleep, and there is no sign of forced entry and very few clues to go on. The only clue points to a second high-ranking member, one Simon Van Horn, as the murderer. The murder weapon used was presented to Van Horn in an awards ceremony several weeks prior. Unfortunately, Van Horn is the only person with a key to the glass case which held the sword and there is, again, no sign of forced entry (smashed glass, cut class, etc.).

## Timeline

The standard timeline is used, however, the current year presented in the book is not. The current date (adventure starts with characters receiving a phone call) is 27 December 2001.

## Setting

The campaign takes place in Syracuse, New York. It's in the midst of Winter and snow covers the ground (about four inches deep). The adventure starts at around 3 am, when the character receives a phone call.

## The Crime Scene

The bedroom of the Seeker, known as David Ranier, is a grisly sight indeed (roll save vs. Horror Factor 12). Ranier has been impaled with an ornate sword. Unfortunately, the malcontents didn't stop here. It appears as if they peeled his belly open, pulling out his entrails. From the look of horror and agony on Ranier's face, he probably was not dead from the stab wound yet. The entire floor surrounding the bed is soaked with blood and the smell is not pleasant. Luckily, the cops haven't been here yet to screw anything up.

**Clue #1:** A signature print can be found on the sword, showing where it was made. The address found later (through simple research) is local. It appears to have been manufactured at Stiehl, Inc.

**Clue #2:** Runic/magic etchings can be seen, though barely (roll Perception, difficulty of 14), on the blade of the weapon. Later research (about 2 hours in the Seeker library) shows that the etchings are actually the signature of a mage, probably the one who enchanted the sword. A local address is easily found in the phone book (there isn't one in the Seeker's records).

## Stiehl, Inc.

Stiehl, Inc. is a small store on the west side, in the business district. It's a one-story, red brick building, the entrance is covered by a short deck. On the deck sits a husky man smoking a cigar. The man is covered with soot and grime. He's dressed in blue jeans and a t-shirt and obviously isn't the most cleanly person alive.

**GM Note:** The man isn't overly helpful unless one of the players flashes him a badge, real or not.

**Information:** Provided the players either flash a badge or a little cash (at least \$100), the man is willing to discuss his customer records. He's able to come up with an address of the buyer fairly quickly, even throws in a general description of the guy for an extra \$50.

### **The Humble Abode**

The address is for a small apartment in the suburbs north of town. The players arrive on the fifth floor and locate the apartment without problems. Then they knock on the door.

**Encounter:** Once the players have knocked on the door, a man rounds the corner and opens fire with a sub-machinegun, spraying the area (use normal spray rules) with bullets (silver-tipped, hollow-point). After nailing the players (hits each player twice, random location), the man runs. The players may be able to catch up with him, if they have a greater speed and make a total of two successful P.E. checks (roll under the attribute score, natural 19 or 20 automatically fails). The "man" is a Namtar Hollow Man. If the shell/body is killed, the players will see a large beetle-like creature crawl out of the man's neck (after taking the head off).

Once the Hollow Man has been dealt with, either been lost or killed, the players make it back to the apartment. The man inside is, with good reason, reluctant to open the door, but a quick flash of a badge again gets them in the door. The sorcerer is extremely willing to help and answers any questions he is able to.

**Information:** The man has no idea what has happened and is appalled that his enchantment had been used in such an unspeakable crime. Unfortunately, the only help the man can offer is the address where the sword was mailed to. The address is in Buffalo, New York.

### **An Abandoned Warehouse**

The address provided by the sorcerer leads the players to an abandoned warehouse in the industrial sector of northern Buffalo. The place was only recently abandoned, as is obvious by the lack of dust and the general cleanliness of the place. Not a speck of dust, grime, or mildew can be found, along with any hope of fingerprints or possible clues (well, maybe not all).

**Encounter:** As the players search the warehouse, a portal opens, out of sight of the player characters (probably another section of the warehouse or just outside). At any rate, the characters are approached by a man in his late twenties or early thirties. He wears a trench coat, khakis and a fedora. (A successful perception check against a difficulty of 17 or detect concealment roll will reveal that this man has weapons concealed underneath the trench coat.) He approaches them in a friendly manner, hoping to gain their trust. If he is able to gain their trust, he will give the players false information and send them to an ambush. If the players distrust him and ask about the weapons, he will try to play it cool and say that he is a police officer that was sent to meet them. (The players should realize that no one knows they were coming). Whether the characters attack and kill the man or if they incapacitate him and question him is entirely up to the players, though it's probably better that they incapacitate and question him.

**Information:** If the players manage to capture and interrogate the man, they will learn only that he was hired through email and a transaction wired to his account by the employer to watch the warehouse and approach anyone who entered in an attempt to get information about them. He's never seen the face. However, the players should be able to track the source of the

transaction, giving them the name of the individual holding the account and an address. The address leads them to residence of the Fleshsculptor.

If the players can't capture the man, they can continue to search the warehouse. A successful search (detect concealment) will reveal a piece of cloth torn from a piece of clothing. This piece of cloth is from Ranier's clothing. An analysis will reveal traces of a chemical found only at two chemical processing plants in the city. If the players continue to search, they will find mud from the tires of a van in the parking lot. The mud also contains traces of the same chemical found in the cloth above.

### **Fleshie's House**

As the players approach the house, a large mansion surrounded by gates and a high brick wall, they are stopped by a small group of, what appear to be, security guards. There are three, all human, wearing business suits (reminiscent of Men In Black) and sunglasses. There is the obvious bulk of a pistol under their coat.

**Note:** A successful perception roll (difficulty of 13) will reveal that the two "statues" on either side of the gate are alive and have shifted slightly. A successful Lore: Nightlords, will reveal them to be Hounds. A second perception roll (difficulty level 16) will reveal a small, gnomish creature (a Mountebank and the fleshsculptor's familiar) trying to hide inside the gate, out of sight.

If the guards are provoked in any way, or threatened by the players, they will not hesitate to try to remove the players from the property. If a fight breaks out, the Hounds will attack immediately, and the Mountebank will run for the house to warn the Fleshsculptor and his henchmen.

**Encounter:** Once the players make it to the house, there are a couple of possibilities. (1) The fleshsculptor may be waiting for them if his familiar made it back to warn him and (2) the fleshsculptor is surprised (not likely considering, if the players were forced to kill his familiar, the fleshsculptor would have felt it). The fleshsculptor is willing to protect his investment and his employer and will fight the players (mostly by throwing his henchmen into the fray and then trying to make an escape), though not to the death.

**Information:** Once the players manage to incapacitate the fleshsculptor, they will be able to, after a couple hours of questioning and "convincing", learn that the flesh sculptor was hired by yet another person. He gives the players an address, then sneers and disappears in a cloud of smoke (while still tied down, handcuffed, whatever, it doesn't matter).

The address is a Miami, Florida address. Once there, the players will discover that it's actually the address of a corporate building in the middle of bustling downtown Miami.

### **Miami Corp**

The corporate building has security tighter than a Drill Sergeant's ass. It will be a trick to get inside and gain the information needed.

**Method #1:** Flash a badge and try to get in to question the CEO, or ask the CEO for permission to question some of his employees. This method might work, but unfortunately, once the CEO determined what the players were asking about and how close they were, would result in immediate ejection from the building.

**Method #2:** Make an appointment to see the CEO. This is such an obvious solution that it's doubtful that the players will choose this one. If, for some strange reason, the players do choose this one, they will be able to get in within a few days, giving them time to plan and prepare their questions and possibly get a little more information about the company. Once the players are seen by the CEO, he will be evasive on many of the questions. If the players hit the right chord, the CEO will immediately inform the players that it was nice meeting them and that he has another appointment to attend and then have them shown out. If the players refuse to go, then he will have them forcefully removed from the building.

**Method #3:** Breaking and Entering. This method will be the most likely end result if the players investigate their other options fully and are thrown out. It will take some time, but the players should be able to pick up blueprints or get a layout of the building by the time they are prepared to break in. Either way, they will eventually end up needing to purchase various types of equipment they will need from the black market.

**Information:** Once the players make it into the building, after crawling around and sneaking about, they will eventually be able to peer through some opening (a crack in the door, the grate of the ventilation duct) to see the CEO talking to someone else (unfortunately, that person cannot be seen, only heard). Here is the conversation:

**CEO (shouting angrily):** Why must you always talk in riddles?!

**Other Voice (calm, but very ominous):** Why must you insist on damaging my operation? I came to you. It is because of me that you have your wealth. Never forget that.

**CEO:** I called to you for days with no answer. If you want me to be able to do anything, you must be available when I call for you.

**Other Voice (threatening):** Why is that?

**CEO:** There have been people asking questions about my associate in New York. What do you want me to do with them?

**Other Voice (turning to leave):** Kill them.

As the second man in the room turns to leave, a giant black cloak billows out behind him. If the players choose to enter the room at this time, they will enter just in time to see the second man, though it is questionable if it is indeed a man, step through a shimmering gate of energy and disappear.

From here anything can happen. The players need to, in some way, capture or persuade the CEO to give them the information they need (i.e. the location of Ranier).

### **Chemlabz, Inc.**

This is a large, factory-style building, complete with vats of bubbling chemicals (think Batman). Three humans (presumably) stand near a single man, tied down to a chair. The chair sits precariously near the edge of a catwalk, directly over one of the chemical vats. One hint of an assault will cause Ranier to meet an untimely demise as he will be shoved into the chemical vat.

**Notes:** The players will need to sneak in and take the group by surprise. The three people standing near Ranier are the fleshsculptor, a sorcerer, and a third human (actually a Nightbane). Hidden away in an Astral Domain is an Astral Lord, who will step to the material plane if a battle begins (has a viewing portal). Also, hidden away in other areas of the plant are the other lieutenants (an Ashmedai and a Mirrormage) and their underlings (2d8 NSB Agents, 1d4 hounds, an immortal [see Mystic China or use a regular human with a few extra powers], and a psychic [any type, doesn't really matter]) that will show up 1d4 minutes after a fight begins.

What happens now could be anything, but give the players a chance. Hopefully the players will save Ranier and clear the name of the other Seeker. But there remain some questions to be answered. First, who was the second person in the office of the CEO and why did he want Ranier? How is that person going to react when he finds out that his plan has been foiled (can we say "sequel"?)?

Written by Thoth  
thoth@interkan.net  
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