

full purse into a carnival, but there are always those who do. While there is the usual danger of thieves and pickpockets, the carnivals hold a far greater danger to those who want to hold onto their money. The carnies don't want to just steal your money, they want to swindle it out of you.

There are a hundred thousand ways to scam cash from the unwary. The sort of tricks a carnie plays are usually called "smiles," named such because they are said to make the Lord of Deception smile. So carnies ask each other if they'd "like to help make Ranald smile" when asking for help with a scam, which is usually shorted to 'fancy making someone smile?' A smile always relies on the greed of the mark. It is usually the victim's belief that he is getting the better end of the deal that proves their undoing, which is what makes Ranald smile the most. The mark often hurries the scam artist into signing the contract, convinced that he has seen a flaw that will make him rich. A few common scams and tricks are described in the following section.

## MARKS

The term "mark" comes from a carnival tradition. The folk at the entrance to the carnival are not only there to take entrance fees, but also to observe the patrons. Anyone who seems to be carrying lots of money or who seems especially gullible is given a mark. This mark could be as simple as a chalk mark on the back. However, the true scam artist prides himself on subtle and more devious marks. One option is to give the mark a gift like a flower for his buttonhole, something that he wears proudly as he goes about the fair. All the other carnival folk will know what mark to look for and are sure to make the mark's wearer a target for every scam they can muster.



## GOLDEN TICKET

This is a variation on the mark system. The mark is given a special ticket for the fair. He is told that this ticket gets him one free ride or entrance to a particular booth, the location of which is pointed out to him. However, somehow the operator of the show in question fails to take the ticket from the patron. If he is dishonest, he uses the ticket again to gain another free ride or entrance. Those who do so are marked, for they have proven that they are willing to cheat the carnival and, therefore, deserve to be cheated in return.

## MAN-EATING CHICKEN

There are plenty of ways to advertise an attraction to make it sound very exciting, when it isn't very special at all. Those who pay their copper to see a "Man-Eating Chicken" instead find themselves watching a gentleman consume a piece of poultry. Needless to say, they are usually upset. However, this is where the booth showman can really shine. He apologizes and suggests that they take it all in good humour; perhaps the patrons can convince their friends to see the show, so they can have a good laugh at them too. Effectively the carnie brings the patrons in on the joke, and they leave to scam their friends on his behalf. They usually forget they still paid their coppers, and are now sending people to give more money to the man who just cheated them. It takes a charming carnie to pull this off, but the irony alone is worth it.

## FALSE CUSTOMERS

With all the scams going on at the booths and shows, you'd think people would eventually get upset. It is important to make your crowd believe they can win. Unfortunately, this means giving them prizes. So the carnival folk who are not involved in running the show (such as the roustabouts and general hands) are sent out to enjoy the carnival. When they reach the booths, the games are rigged to win. They manage to win the prize to great clamour and excitement, so everyone knows "We have a winner, ladies and gentlemen!" Of course, the rousty hasn't actually won, as he will be giving back everything he wins when the carnival is over.

## BLOOD MONEY

This smile relies on the carnival being in town for maybe a day or two, but getting out quickly after that. The victim goes to get a card reading, but any audience with a mystic will do. During the reading the mystic will see something terrible (but avoidable) in the future. She will wonder aloud if the victim may be under a form of curse. Casually, she inquires if the victim has any money on him . . . not to give her, but so she can read his fate in more detail. The victim passes over the purse and, with a simple trick of prestidigitation, a similar purse is exchanged for the first. This second purse, however, is filled with pig's blood; the victim's purse begins to bleed! Oh horror, the money is indeed cursed. Luckily the mystic can defeat this terrible evil. She works some more mumbo-jumbo over the victim's purse, then tests it again. This time it doesn't bleed.

Now comes the real scam. The victim must bring all his money to the mystic so that it, too, can be exorcized. No valuables are

required, just the money; this conveniently “proves” that the mystic isn’t trying to scam the victim. The ritual is performed over that money as well, saving the victim from his fate. However, it has been wrapped up (with mystic ribbon or bits of herbs) and must not be opened before the next full moon or a worse curse will descend. On the next full moon the victim finds that his purse contains only bits of copper or paper, the real purse having been swapped during the “cleansing ritual.” By then, of course, the carnival is long gone.

## SALE OF THE CENTURY

This is another smile that can be used as an addendum to the Blood Money scam. If the victim looks like he isn’t going for the con, the mystic offers a small statue or other item of value as collateral, to be kept while the lengthy ritual is performed. The mystic tells the victim he can collect his money by

returning the statue. Now everyone has something of value, so honesty is assured. The mystic claims not to know how much the item is worth, but offers it to show good faith. Needless to say, the victim gets it valued and discovers that it is worth a lot more than the money he handed over. He decides not to return for his money, having effectively bought the item for a bargain price. Sadly, the person valuing it was part of the trick. He has “borrowed” the shop of an honest antiques dealer or other merchant to appear to be a permanent resident, and claims not to have the money on him that day to purchase the “incredibly valuable artefact.” The next day, when the mark returns to the shop to sell the item, the store’s true owner will have just returned from a trip out of town, will report that he was closed the previous day, or the like. It turns out, of course, that the item is utterly worthless, and the mark is as unlikely to see any of his money, as he is to see the carnival still in town the next day.

## — TRAVELLING TROUPES —

This section provides details for a few sample carnival troupes. Players might get involved by joining the troupe or scouting them out on behalf of another troupe. However, is it perhaps more likely that they (or their patron) might be scammed by one of these troupes and come looking for a way to repay the favour.

### MORDECHAI’S WONDEROUS WAXWORKS

This carnival is the most realistic waxworks show on the circuit. It is filled entirely by all manner of deformity and oddity. Visitors are amazed at the clever waxwork sculptures, arranged on various stages and scenery. Some people even swear they saw the waxworks move!

Unfortunately, the poor souls on display are all too real. Makeup is expensive, and waxworks are hard to maintain and transport. So instead, Mordechai employs any and all the deformed and strange souls he can find. The exhibits cover all manner of creatures and Humans that have been dealt a cruel hand by nature. For anyone so cursed by Chaos, the promise of food and shelter is too good to pass up. However, the employees of Mordechai’s fair are far from well-treated.

Mordechai cares nothing for those who serve him, and forces them to stand in their fixed poses for hours at a time while the visitors gawk. Those who move just a little are refused food, and sometimes brutally beaten. When visitors tell Mordechai they were sure one of the waxworks moved, he assures them that the realism of the show is so great, most people think they see movement from his “art.”

Mordechai works hard to give his carnival has glamour, because that is what sells. Unfortunately, he hates and loathes anyone not born “normal.” The false waxworks are treated like animals and kept caged while not working. Their clothes are elegant and rich when on display, but they are stripped naked when they are returned to their cages so the clothes can be washed and kept well. The suffering in the carnival is monstrous.

As if that weren’t enough, Mordechai has discovered a profitable sideline to his show. One patron who insisted that the waxworks were real would not be dissuaded by Mordechai’s usual banter. However, instead of exposing the scam, he wanted to pay extra to see them do tricks or dance for him. Over time a sickening circle of rich patrons has developed. They never come to see the public shows, but are let in late at night for private shows at great expense. There they can do anything they like to those on display short of killing them. However, should the patron be willing to come to an arrangement . . .

Players who come across the show might discover its horrible secrets. Can they rescue the performers? However, if they do, who will feed and shelter them? Perhaps they could find and expose the circle of rich, deviant patrons, the blackmail from which could easily afford to provide for those they have abused. However, they are amongst the richest people in the Empire, and don’t like being given orders. Characters that cross Mordechai should be warned. He is rumoured to own a small piece of Warpstone, and those who displease him could become permanent additions to the show.

### THE TRAVELLING SHRINE OF HEALING

This carnival is unusual in that its primary purpose is not to scam its patrons but to heal them. It was originally a group of missionaries dedicated to Shallya. They travelled the country looking to bring healing to the poorer and more out of the way corners of the Empire. While their skills were usually received with gratitude, they still found it difficult to achieve their true purpose. The priestess of Shallya who led them realized that prevention was far better than cure. She wanted to treat healthy people to keep them from getting ill, and wished to educate them as to ways to promote their general wellbeing. Sadly, while ill people will travel to see doctors, healthy people are not so keen to do so.

So the priestess got together with a few Priests of Ranald. They were looking to spread the ways of Ranald in the same way.