

HANGOVER CITY

A City Sourcebook for Dresden Files RPG

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Chapter Ten- Pool of LIFE

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Several years earlier...

The rain patters down on the plastic of the tent, rippling the blue and white stripes with the rivers it is creating. In the the mud beneath it two wizard crouch nervously over a large stone disk, around the size of an old cart wheel. They are treating it with all the caution of an unexploded bomb. The younger of the men, Fidel Marino, dressed in a long victorian frock coat over a white ruffled dress shirt straightens up. His eyes flicking between the stone and the shorter more portly man in a grey edwardian waist coat and trousers; his mentor Callum Doyle.

The older man picks up a bucket of water and throws it over the stone, washing the mud away. Fidel flinches back as the water hits the stone, bracing himself for any reaction. Callum smiles at him when there is nothing. He moves over to his jacket, carefully hung on a spade standing near them in the mud, and pulls out a cloth to clean off his hands.

Fidel moves closer, looking down at what the water has revealed. The stone has a ring carved into its surface, the line crossed with groups of deep groves.

"Ogham then?" He says staring at the script.

Callum removes a pair of wire rimmed glasses, without any actual glass in them, from his top pocket. He pulls them on blinking at the stone. "Yes." He confirms. "And quite a potent little artefact."

The flap in the tent behind them opens briefly as they are joined by a fair haired man in official looking water proof coat. The left breast emblazoned with cities coat of arms. He steps into the cover of tent, and despite the rain outside is almost instantly dry.

"Sheriff." Callum nods in his direction, taking care to peer over the spectacle frames.

"The Mortal authorities have cleared the site. That chap from the museum is being a pain. He is demanding that the bomb is removed and not destroyed in situ. Rather concerned for the historical remains."

Callum nods and then with more than a hint of sarcasm says "Ahh Bless." He looks to Fidel. "Read it yet."

The young mage looks up at him and grimaces. "Not really my field Callum." He admits.

Callum puts down the cloth and moves over. "Some times I don't know why I set you those exercises." He mutters. He leans over the stone and sighs. "Hmm yes.."

The Sheriff moves closer, watching as Callum works his way round the stone, occasionally popping back to check some detail, then he stands. "Well It is a gate way into some where deep in the Never-Never. Summer I think." He announces. "And the inscription on it serves two purposes. One way its a warning, explaining why you should under no account open the gate."

"And the other?" Fidel asks.

"Is the spell to open it." He says.

"So what happens if we do open it?" Fidel asks nervously.

"Oh the usual I guess. Plagues, rains of blood, end of the world. Shite like that. Summers powers unbound on earth basically." Callum dismisses. He looks up with a mischievous grin. "I say we crack it."

"Do it." Ream says.

Callum looks at him sharply and clearly surprised. "No. Ream you are the sensible one. You are the one that says don't be so fucking stupid Callum, you can not risk destroying the world just to satisfy your cat like curiosity." He reminds the Sheriff.

"My analysis leads me to conclude there is no alternative." Ream responds. "This is the key the Fisher King spoke of. It can not be allowed to fall into the hands of the mortals."

"Well allow me to be the voice of reason." Fidel says. He turns to his mentor grabbing his lapels and shaking him gently to emphasis his fear. "Callum, for the good of the city, and the rest of the world I guess, you can not do this."

The three men look at each other, suddenly caught in the moment of the exchange.

Fidel shudders and lets go of his mentor. "Oh gods we really are through the looking glass on this one, aren't we?"

Ream looks down at the stone. "Yes. But then is that not always the way with things of the Fae."

He looks up to see the two wizards staring at him.

"Poetry? That'll work." Fidel dead pans back at the sheriff.

Ream grunts at him and heads back into the rain. "Find me an alternative Arch Mage, that is what you are here for."

Callum glares at Fidel.

His apprentice crouches down over the stone. "I don't work well with an audience." He 'apologises'. Then he grins. "But I think I have a cunning plan."

The Pool Of Life

This setting contains a number of entities that are not 'cannon' in the Dresden-verse, most noticeably the ghosts and the living statues detailed in this section. Of course like any supplement you are free to ignore them, however let me offer a following by way of an explanation to persuade you to consider introducing them into your world...

There is a reason why this place is called the Pool Of LIFE.

The small fishing community that became Liverpool grew up around a sea lake which provided a natural harbour for their boats and ensured a good supply of shellfish and seafood in even the harshest of winters. The people of the community were grateful for this bounty and always took care to leave offerings to the White Lady of the Sea; a local name of a powerful summer court sidhe. It attracted her attention and she took a close interest in the people and gifted them a powerful faerie artefact to assist them in times of great need. This took the form of a wheel of stone and was embedded in the bed of the sea lake.

As the city expanded, the sea lake was enclosed to form a dock, and eventually filled in and the customs house for the new docks was built on the site. The Liver bird on the coat of arms on the customs house was directly above the artefact, and became the first living statue. As the 'needs' of the people of the city turned to protecting their shipping trade. Over the years the spirit of the guardian has moved and his old body was destroyed or stopped being fit for purpose. The birds on the top of the Liver building were positioned to show ships the safe channel into the dock, and as a result they were an obvious choice.

Similarly 'Liverpool resurgent' was designed to be an expression of the city's passion to rebuild and recover from the destruction of the Blitz which had left so many hungry and homeless; thus it is perhaps not so surprising that the power of the artefact be expressed in response to that need and gift "Dicky" with his passion for protecting those with no roof to call their own. Eleanor seeks to help "all the lonely people" that were made famous by the song.

But the artefact does not just effect statues. Mortals that have died with some aspect of their life undone (Mrs Doyle and her daughter), or in a state of desperation (McKenzie) can also draw on its power in order to sustain themselves and given them alive beyond life.

The artefact is still there, although there was a dodgy moment a few years ago when it was uncovered by an archeological dig exploring the old dock. The Covenant arranged for it to be re buried deeper, and Elijah's flat allows him to keep an eye on the spot and make sure it is not disturbed again. Despite this, although they know it is vital and powerful -The Fisher King dropped dark warnings about it- they do not actually know the extent of what it is or is capable of which is probably no bad thing.

However it may be worth noting, the genetics department of the University of Liverpool have noticed that the bacteria and plankton living in the Albert dock and adjacent waters seem to mutate at an alarming rate, and are an excellent source of interesting new genes for G.M. Research.

sentient Ghosts

There is something very strange going on in Liverpool. Any where else in the world Ghosts are fairly limited beings, barely sentient and cursed to relive events in their lives. Here they are different. Here the consciousness of the deceased can in some rare cases continue after death. Some how these determined individuals create a body for themselves in the Never-Never and even manage to press through into the 'real' world in the same way Fae do.

The best known of these is McKenzie. Who acts as spokesman for his people as he is most skilled in pushing through into the mortal world. He also runs the cities 24 hour poker ring up at the Rodney Street church. A ruined building next to his pyramidal tomb. But there are at least 50 known 'aware' ghosts in the city who have signed up to the Covenant, including Mrs Doyle (The arch Mages wife), Garrett Farrow (who lives in Wavertree Lock up) and Alfie Graveney who spends his time 'haunting the Albert Dock' and once appeared on National TV dressed as a Cavalier.

Face of the Ghosts:McKenzie

McKenzie is a tall wiry man, dressed in a long frock coat, cape and top hat. He carries a fog with him when he is out in the city at night which conceals his movements. His face is thin and there is a red fire behind his eyes should any one get close enough to get a good look. He walks with a purposeful military gait and have a grin that can only be described as wicked.

In life James William McKenzie made and lost fortunes, he backed Stephenson rocket and the early railways. He was considered a pillar of the community and a great philanthropist. However he had a darker side; and addition to gambling that was his undoing. He was linked to a body snatching scheme when a number of bodies were uncovered stored away in barrels in the cellar of his house. Although he could not be legally connected to the crime, the gossip was enough that few wished to deal with him form then own.

Facing ruin he was introduced to a Mr Madison, a visitor from America he hoped to be able to beat in a game of cards. Unfortunately for McKenzie the Madison was the better play and he lost everything. Madison offered him a final 'all or nothing' hand. McKenzie complained he had nothing left to offer and Madison asked him for his soul. McKenzie was shocked, but Madison persuaded him, that as an atheist he had nothing really to loose. McKenzie took up the bet, only to loose that hand as well. Madison took a pice of paper with my soul written in McKenzie's own hand, and promised "I will not take your soul until you are laid to rest in your grave." He then vanished in a cloud of brimstone. McKenzie attempted to trick the devil out of his final prize by being buried sat upright in a stone pyramid, with a winning hand of cards in his grasp. The attempt was only partially successful, and McKenzie is still here.

At least, that is the way McKenzie tells it there are no other witnesses to collaborate his claim of a card game with the devil. It could just be that McKenzie is merely spinning a good tale.

The living Statues

Living statues have long existed. The best example being Talos, the bronze man who protected Crete and was killed by Jason. They are often tied to a location or group of people who they defend, and that is certainly the case with those in Liverpool. By day they are merely creations of metal or stone. But at night they are free to go out and do what needs to be done. Often they rely on the Guild of Wizards to create veils to hid their actions, or create the illusion that they are still on their plinth whilst they are out an about.

The current best guess is that they are spirits which animate the statue. It has been postulated that they are created by magic, but no one is sure exactly who is going about doing this. The Fisher king said it is the city itself but that just seems daft.

The Liver Bird

The oldest is The Liver Bird. His first appeared as a symbol of the city on the Corporate Seal 1350. In 1668 the Earl of Derby gave a mace to the council which bore his shape and linked him with the authorities of the city. However he did not appear as a 'living statue' until 1720. The bird on the coat of arms on the new Customs house moved to alert the customers officer to an attempted theft of valuable cargo placed in the building for safe keeping. Needless to say the mortals fled in terror, and the cargo was retrieved. It save a very important trading deal between the city and the Americas.

During the second world war the building was heavily damaged by fire bombs and demolished. But the liver bird's spirit had already moved to the massive bronze bird on the Liver buildings, which allowed him to look out over both the sea and the city (A glamour provides the 'other' bird when he shifts his perch). He seems very happy there and attempts to persuade him to move to a smaller structure have been firmly rebuffed. The most problematic part of this existence is that he can not speak any human language. However he has an assistant, Oliver Waterson, who is a were cormorant who is more than happy to translate.

The Liver Bird sees the whole of the city as his domain, and will respond to any threat to it. The combat worthiness of an all but invulnerable 15 ft metal bird kind of speaks to itself, however it is rather hard to cover up when he flies. As a result he usually turns out if it is something very very important.

Dicky Lewis

Dicky Lewis is the local name for the Jacob Epstein creation Liverpool Resurgent; a bronze naked man standing on the prow of a boat on the Lewis's store on Renshaw Street. He has been standing there since 1958, and often complains of the cold; it is a fairly windy corner after all. As a result Dicky has a soft spot for those sleeping rough, and often acts to protect them. Since the shop closed down, the basement has become a popular sight for the homeless to gather.

Face:Eleanor Rigby

Eleanor provides a clue as to the possibly origins of the Living statures. There is a grave in Woolton Cemetery for an Eleanor Rigby who died at the age of 44 in 1939. In 1966 the Beatles (Reams Four Warblers) released a song called Eleanor Rigby which became very popular. In 1982 Tommy Steele created a bronze statue of an lady and dedicated it to 'all the lonely people'. The casting was paid for by public subscription. It was donated to the city and placed in Stanley street. It rapidly became a focal point for people looking for a bit of company, who would sit and talk to it. Others even left her gifts and flowers.

In 1989 there was an accident at a football match in Hillsborough where Liverpool were playing between Nottingham Forest in the FA Cup semi-final. 94 liverpool supporters were killed, with 3 more dying over the following days and years. In a state of shock the people of the city pulled together. There was a gathering in the city centre in memory of the dead the following week.

Eleanor Rigby attended.

It caused a bit of a stir amongst the Covenant. Dickie was one thing; he had been created as a sign of the cities determination to recover form the destruction of the blitz and created as a major monumental piece of art by a world renowned artist. Eleanor was a lump of bronze that had be designed by a singer. Still no one could deny that the statue walked, and seemed to have a purpose. No one in a city that sings "You'll never walk alone" should ever walk alone. And that is what Eleanor does. When the people of the city are sad and alone and desperate, she is there. She uses glamour now because being addressed by a statue can be a little disturbing. However she does have a knack for finding people and giving them a bit of a pep talk, or the shoulder to cry on, that they need to get them through their darkest hours.

John and Cyril Moores

John and Cyril are not living statues, at least they are not living statues yet. They are part of an 'experiment' being carried out by some of the apprentices at the lyceum. They are working on the idea that the flowers left with Eleanor Rigby somehow acted as offerings to the gods, and thus attracted some spirit into the statue. They are trying to reproduce the effect by leaving 'gifts' in the out stretched hand of John Moore. Each night one of the apprentice's leaves something on his way home. Sadly the 'gift' is more likely to be a half eaten Sausage dinner or Kebab than anything of worth, and after one particular late night out the gift was a squashed traffic cone, which was left on Cyrils head.

The Guild do not hold out much success for the experiment if the apprentices do not take their task more seriously.

Living statue Template

Description: Animated statues made of stone or metal that have some level of free will and often act as guardians to some location or types of people in the city.

What We Know: Not a lot really. The best known ones in Liverpool are large monumental statues that have significance to the people of the city. But there may be other smaller ones suitable to be P.C.s.

Must Powers:

Mythic Toughness [-6], the catch being they are still vulnerable to 'weapons' that could damage the stone or metal they are made from.

Optional Powers:

Guide my hand [-1] type of effect that guides them to those who need their aid.

Marked by power [-1] - The guardian spirits get a certain amount of respect.

Supernatural (or greater) **Strength [-4]**,

Other powers that might be applicable, depending on they have been created from.

Claws[-1]

wings[-1]

Diminutive size [-1]

Hulking size [-2]

Skills:

Presence, Might, Intimidation, Craftsmanship (for those vital running repairs) plus skills appropriate to the role they play in the community.

Weaknesses: Compulsion to defend the area or community they are tied to. The statues do not 'heal' and have to be repaired by a craftsman when damaged. Though the Liver Bird has managed to 'possess' a new body created for him on 3 occasions when the original was destroyed.