

DECEMBER
10¢

MACABRE Tales



The Shadow of Krampus

A HORRIFYING FREE MINI-SUPPLEMENT

MACABRE Tales

Introduction

When most people think of holiday folklore, they usually conjure up mental images of Santa Claus riding through the snowy December skies atop his reindeer-driven sleigh to deliver presents to well-behaved children the world over.

That's all nice and sweet, but there's a darker side to Christmas folklore that's more apt to raise goosebumps than to warm hearts. That darker side has a name... and its name is Krampus.

Krampus, often referred to as the Christmas Demon, has many legends attached to him, varying wildly from one region to the next. The most

common version of this vile creature is that he's a satyr-like being who unleashes upon errant children sadistic and severe punishments that often include death.

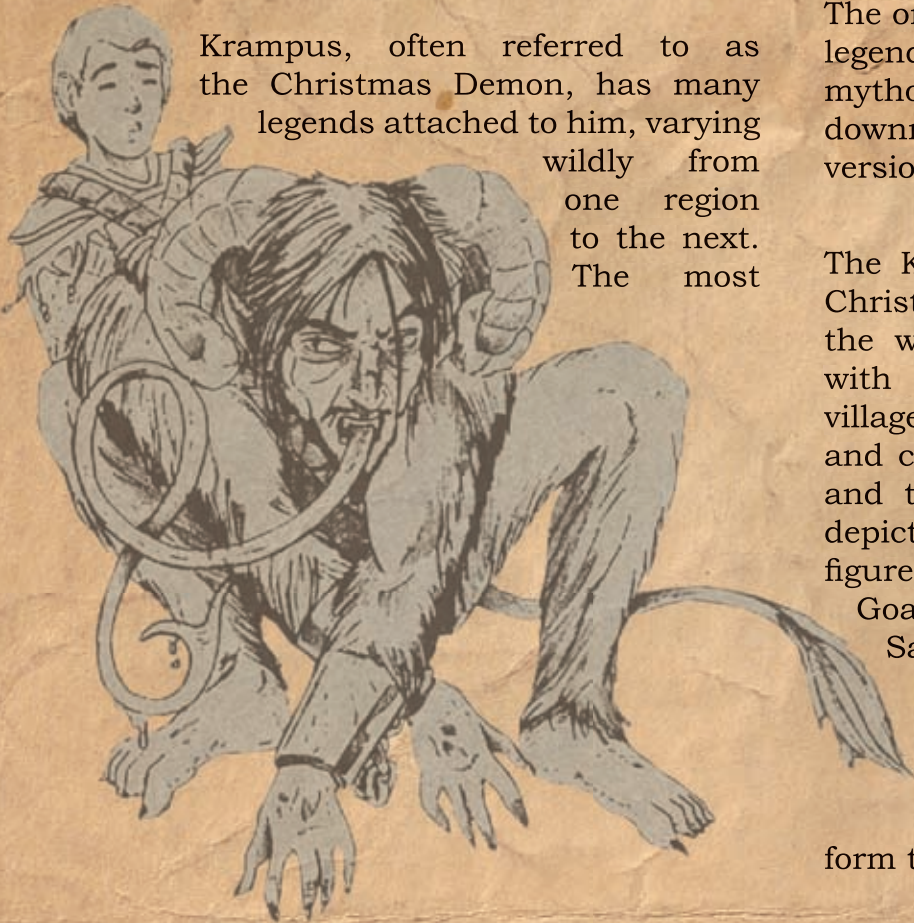
In this free mini-supplement, we will draw upon numerous sources of folklore to create a version of Krampus that truly embodies Lovecraftian horror. This version can easily be modified for your own needs, using ours as a basis from which to work.

A Brief History

The origin and development of the Krampus legend is, like much of Lovecraft's own mythology, convoluted, sketchy and downright vague. What follows is an abridged version of its history.

The Krampus figure has its roots in pre-Christian Alpine Pagan folklore, wherein the winter solstice season was abundant with numerous forms of mummary – villagers dressing up in elaborate masks and costumes to perform celebratory plays and the like. These costumes were often depictions of animals, wild men or mythical figures, specifically Old Man Winter and the Goat Man, the predecessors of St. Nick/Santa and Krampus, respectively

Krampus himself first found his way into Germanic folklore during the 1600s, more or less taking on the form that persists to this day.



The Catholic Church disdained the notion of celebrations revolving around devil-like figures and sought to put a stop to them during the Inquisition. Their attempts to do so succeeded in all but the remotest locations (such as the inaccessible Alps). Around the same time, Christianity began integrating Krampus into their own winter celebrations, teaming him up with St. Nicholas, where he acted as the bad cop to the exalted one's good cop.

About Krampus

The legends surrounding Krampus are multi-faceted and diverse. In this section, we attempt to explore the various nuances of this entity so that we may better understand how he can best be utilized in *Macabre Tales*.

Appearance

The details of Krampus' visage are different from region to region. He is usually described as a demonic humanoid with strong goat-like affectations (not unlike the satyr from Greek mythology) and the general look of the classic "devil" figure, complete with deep-set eyes, arched eyebrows, an exaggeratedly long tongue and a pair of horns on his head.

While the nature, length and coverage of his fur has taken on many different descriptions, it's usually black or brown in coloration.

Some versions depict him as possessing humanlike feet with toes that end in sharp claws, while other versions give him cloven hooves. Yet others show him with one foot and one hoof.

Most renditions of Krampus characterize him as having his wrists bound together by a long chain, symbolizing the binding of the Devil by the Christian church. The chain often has bells or cowbells attached to them.



It is rare to see a representation of Krampus that doesn't wield a weapon of some sort. This is most often a bundle of birch branches, but can also be a whip or trident. He commonly packs around a basket, sack, barrel, washtub or other such container (sometimes strapped to his back), which he uses to stuff small children into when spiriting them away.

Punishment

One aspect of Krampus that remains unchanged from one version to the next is that he doles out punishments to children who have misbehaved. These disciplinary tactics range in severity from "harsh" to "unrelentingly psychotic".

Krampus' most common form of punishment is the bludgeoning of a naughty child with a bundle of birch branches (or a whip

in some incarnations) until he or she is genuinely contrite for their misbehavior. Children who have been particularly awful may be stuffed into a basket or barrel and either drowned or devoured. Some versions have him unceremoniously dumping such children into the fires of Hell or taking them back to his lair to torture them until they are repentant.

According to various lurid postcards from the 19th and 20th centuries, Krampus partakes in even more forms of sadistic punishment, including savagely ripping children's hair out, yanking their ears off, forcing them off a cliff, shackling them and drowning them in ink before fishing their corpses out with a trident.



Periods of Activity

Traditionally speaking, Krampus engages in the punishment of wicked children during the first week of December, especially on December 5th, otherwise known as Krampusnacht or Krampus Night. During this time, the man-beast roams the streets, rattling rusty chains and clanking cowbells in an effort to frighten children before meting out his brutal brand of discipline.

With all the general nastiness taken care of, the following evening (December 6th) is the Feast of Saint Nicholas, which tends to be a jubilant celebration, with Saint Nick filling the boots of good children with assorted treats.

Other Information of Interest

Below, we discuss some miscellaneous tidbits that may be useful.

- In more rustic areas, Krampus is accompanied by an assortment of minions, including the antlered “wild men” figures. They are collectively referred to as *Schabmänner* or *Rauhen*.
- Inexplicably, numerous postcards featured Krampus wooing beautiful women and even participating in mildly fetishistic sexual shenanigans with them. This goes completely against the grain of the creature's established nature, but perhaps he has some manner of “pheromone control” that enables him to lure the fairer sex to him.
- Sometimes Krampus is seen by Saint Nick's side, while other times, he acts alone.

Using Krampus in Macabre Tales

Bringing Krampus into your games of Macabre Tales should be quite easy. The first thing that must be decided is whether or not he ties into the Arkham Cycle.

If you decide to integrate him into the Arkham Cycle, it could very well be that Krampus is actually one of Nyarlathotep's many forms. The entity delights in using this form to terrify children and create panic in the adults whose offspring it drags off. You could also tie him into Sub-Niggurath, given his goat-like visage and his tendency to dwell in the woods. It's not a terribly big stretch for Krampus to be one of her Young, or some deviation thereof.

Krampus could just as easily be completely unrelated to the Arkham Cycle and could be of almost any origin that seeps from your twisted imagination. Perhaps he is exactly what parents teach their children that he is: a demon or devil. Alternatively, he could have a very natural genesis and is simply the last member of his species. And it's entirely plausible that he's actually simply the henchman of an even larger threat. Who or what that threat could be is up to you.

Another important factor to consider is how unsettling you wish for Krampus to be. You can keep it relatively light in tone, allowing him only to scare the children or at most spank them with the branches for their naughtiness. Truer to Lovecraft's style, however, would be to take things in a more drastic and severe direction, having Krampus snatch away the offending youths and kill them. Which direction you take should be based around the comfort zone of you and your player. The murder of children makes for very disturbing subject matter, but can lead to some intriguing stories if handled well.

Finally, you'll need to craft a tale revolving around Krampus. The easiest, most straightforward type of story would involve a "monster hunt" scenario, though you'll need to be extra careful to maintain a Lovecraftian feel ("The Dunwich Horror" is a fine example of this type of tale). With a bit more thought, extremely engaging plots can be concocted. Consider drawing the primary character into the story in a naturalistic manner,

avoiding the "hired investigator" trope if at all possible.

There are better ways to make the character (and thus the player) care about what's going on. Perhaps the character is visiting a relative in Austria when his niece or nephew comes up missing, along with other local children. Or maybe the character stumbles across the bloated carcasses of several children floating in a lake and curiosity compels him to get to the bottom of the situation.

Game Stats

Krampus

Body 7: Athletics 1, Fighting 2, Strength 3, Toughness 1

Mind 6: Ingenuity 2, Perception 4

Soul 7: Guile 1, Intimidation 4, Resolve 3

Special Rules: Dark Influence 7 (hour; adult females only), Dark Vision, Hindering Presence, Innate Attack 2 (bundle of birch branches/whip/trident), Unspeakable Visage 5 (7 for children)

Schabmänner

The Schabmänner are lesser minions that do Krampus's bidding in some folklore. Some versions depict them as smaller versions of their master; others depict them as entirely different beasts with antlers. Should you decide to use them in your tale, you can describe them however you wish.

Body 5: Athletics 2, Fighting 1, Strength 2, Toughness 1

Mind 4: Ingenuity 1, Perception 3

Soul 5: Intimidation 2, Resolve 2

Special Rules: Dark Vision, Innate Attack 1 (horns/antlers/small weapons), Unspeakable Visage 4 (6 for children)