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A Horror Mystery





by Nicolas Logue

for 8th-9th Level Adventurers



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# Pedication

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# Foreword

I haven't ever told anyone this before, but: I am afraid of blood. I can't even give blood without freaking out. I put on my best game-face every time a health professional extracts it from my arm, trying hard not to pass out and crumple to the linoleum as I feel my vitae draining from my veins.

I guess that's why I write about it. I like to face my fears. When I was a kid, I was scared of the dark, so at night I would wait till the world went dead and then wander around my house in the pitch black. The attic, the basement, all those terrible places where shadow holds sway - I would stalk them until I was no longer afraid, until I *was* the Thing in the Dark.

I've been trying to do the same with blood lately. Spilling it wantonly just isn't an option in this so called "civilized" world we live in, so I write about it instead. When Wolfgang gave me this golden opportunity, I jumped at the chance to explore all the things that terrify me so.

What did I learn? I learned that the word "patrons" doesn't come close to describe you fine fine souls. You are creators. It has been a rare pleasure and honor to work with such brilliant minds. Thank you for letting me play in the Open Design pool with you all. I marvel at the depths of myth, gothic horror, human nature gone to seed, and darkness we have descended into together.

In **Blood of the Gorgon** we explore the classic Jekyll/ Hyde tale, a story of duplicity, human frailty and the temptations of power. We all have terrible thoughts, but what happens when something spurs us to act on them? When we embrace the foulest children of our id, how can we face ourselves in the morning? How do we justify unspeakable deeds and rationalize living on the suffering of others? These questions are intrinsic to our times, when we can click a mouse and order shoes made by child-labor, or give money to a company that destroys communities simply because their price for sweat socks is 10 cents cheaper. The theme of this adventure can twist a few nights of fun dice-rolling into something more if the players and GM wish.

Within these pages lie action and adventure, villains and challenges, strange places and people your players will witness, oppose, and dirty themselves with. This is a horror adventure, but the scenes and creatures described within are less chilling than the inherent question hurled at our heroes: How are you any different? Infused with the gorgon's blood, every man, woman or child recognizes what they really harbor in their heart of hearts—a monster more terrifying than those without.

In every choice we make that monster rears its head. Every day. It all matters. Next time we are on the subway and a homeless man passes by asking for change, hopefully we think twice before we turn up our nose at him. Next time we see someone in need of help, hopefully we do the right thing, even though we "have better things to do." So here's to us wrestling that demon to the floor every night, and banishing it to whatever foul pit it crawled up out of.

Okay, that all seems way too soap-boxish for the foreword to an adventure. Ignore it. Instead, pick up your dice, grab a GM screen, invite your best friends over, order the pizza, crack open the Dew, and commence to have the most fun you can scaring and exciting your friends to a near-coronary-experience of adrenaline overload.

I can only hope Armand's exploits are not yet done. If I know gamers, and I think I do, the completion of this adventure's writing is only his first breath. A life of ill deeds awaits him. It is up to your fine and fearsome friends to nurture Armand's hateful existence for years to come. Don't forget to drop me a line sometime and tell me how our boy is doing.

Good gaming to you and yours!

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Nicolas Logue

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# No Man Escapes Beath

Time burns us from our mortal coil as a flame doth the curious moth. But other things live on.

Darker forms, devouring life, or fatted on a demon's sins, prowl the earth watching mountains surrender to dust and blow into the sea on Time's swift wings. And so they lurch and hunger on, long after our children's children are bones.

Some things cannot be slain by Time alone, and their blood, mingled with our own, makes gods of us all.

But drink not too deep. For nothing comes without its price... and nothing, no element known to man or god, can distill pure power from the blood of a monster, without the sickly sweet savor of evil following with it.

> —Jarosh Miroslav, Master of the Archive

obeck is a city under siege. Horrors prowl the sewers below. Apparitions stalk noiselessly, gliding along old corridors and listening to the murmurs of the sleeping. Toothy things of feather, fur and scale wait on the city outskirts to attack the unwary. In the Clockwork City, monsters lurk everywhere, and men hunt them.

Men have always sought the blood of monsters. Most spill it in vengeance for their massacred families. Others bathe in it, swimming through an ocean of gore to find treasures worthy of a king's envy. Precious few know the blood is a priceless treasure in and of itself.

Dark Alchemy—part science, part magic, and mostly myth—has long employed the life's essence of bizarre monstrosities in its murky craft, luring men into acts of depravity. Elusive power, just one more drop away, urges

# Introduction

men on like hunting hounds. Ambitious men sink to depths no monster could ever dream in its worst nightmares.

Of all the mythic creatures, the gorgon and its blood hold the most secrets. Ancient sages and poets record the blood's many properties in a thousand dead languages. They say it stills men's hearts, and sets them to beat again. They say it can draw a festering corpse from the grave as fresh and alive as a newborn babe. They say it shows the drinker secrets of the ages, so potent that a man armed with them might walk the world as a god.

Few know the blood's darkest secret nothing as foolish as supreme power, or mastery of life and death. Rather, the blood's dire ability to draw out the monster within a soul. Those who drink the *blood of the gorgon* are forever changed. The horrors hidden in the darkest corners of their soul come unbidden to the light. The blood calls and evil answers. It is a beacon to the urges men bury deep in their hearts. Impulses no one ever speaks aloud, but which everyone harbors deep within. The greatest monsters lie caged in our sinew and blood, waiting to be unleashed.

Blood of the Gorgon is a dark urban adventure that asks heroes to brave terrors without and within. They hunt a deadly murderer who stalks the streets after nightfall, and they cross blades with a strange cult of bloodthirsty men and monsters who rule the city from below. If the heroes are lucky all they stand to lose is their lives... but for most their souls are at stake in a game where monsters and men dance so closely it is impossible to tell them apart.

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Welcome to Blood of the Gorgon, an adventure suitable for 8<sup>th</sup> level characters and inspired by the myth of Asclepius, son of Apollo, and the Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Your party may advance to 9<sup>th</sup> or even 10<sup>th</sup> level in the course of this adventure.

### Adventure Background

hevalier Silas Armand – healer, alchemist, philanthropist, and eccentric in the Clockwork City's more affluent quarter near Crown Square—is a quiet man. He is occasionally a gentleman about town, but no more than necessary to avoid the scurrilous rumor-mongering of his peers. Indeed, Armand's only feverish desires run toward the darkest and most labyrinthine schools of alchemy. His closest companions are his beakers, cauldrons, and nose-searing alchemical compounds. He is over fond of the strange essences of dangerous roots, flowers, and the lethal venoms of man-eating monstrosities.

Armand's reputation as a healer is well known, and because of his charitable nature he visits Zobeck's most downtrodden offering potent cures for common ailments. His family fortune ensures he rarely asks for payment for his services, and he supplies local heroes with potions at reduced cost. Armand's lamp-lit form can often be glimpsed late into the misty hours of the chill morning, shuffling about within his lavish apartments. This silhouette is easily identified by his rail thin, slightly hunched frame, and the characteristic limp he has displayed since childhood. Most just assume Silas paces the night as his mind runs the maze of some new curative recipe.

Armand never knew his father. He left when Silas was nothing more than a swelling in his mother's belly. Life was unkind to

Beatrice Armand, but she was determined to provide for her sweet little boy Silas, no matter what the cost. She married a disgusting old magistrate named Justicar Verdane, once a respected judge of Zobeck, but his mind had long since failed under the strain of a thousand vexing cases. Little more than a gurgling child with a man's wants, he took Beatrice to his sweaty bed. Beatrice endured revulsion and a cold loveless existence, but her new husband's coin and stately apartments provided her sweet little Silas the warmth and comfort of a home. And when Verdane's heart surrendered, his fortunes became her own.

No amount of lustrous gold could undo the torments Silas' father planted deep in Beatrice's mind, or wash away the shame of how she acquired her wealth. Troubled by constant illness, delusional spells, and fits of depression, Beatrice's only joy in life was Silas. She showered the boy with gifts and attention, and in her eyes he could do no wrong. She was quick to blame anyone else (and herself) for his pranks and petty cruelties. Silas was always blameless, a perfect child, the only worthwhile thing Beatrice had wrung from her miserable life.

A monster hides within Silas, though it is unclear when that monster first appeared. Perhaps it was always there, from the first faint heartbeat to flutter in Beatrice's womb. Her words gave it form. Whenever Silas broke a vase or spilled his porridge, his mother cooed how wonderful he was and how his black-hearted father, Armand was to blame for abandoning his sweet child in the womb.

Thus Beatrice bore two sons sharing one body and one much fractured soul. One is everything her delirious mind longs for, young Silas, the sweet child whose quiet kindness was rivaled only by his intelligence. The other was a monster obsessed with power over others who saw those around him as nothing more than animals or toys. He took the only thing its faceless father gave it—his name. And thus the brothers, Silas and Armand were born of a broken mind.

Armand was a bad seed. He would catch toads, pin them to a board by their feet and then slowly squish them almost to death underfoot. He would ease up a bit and do it again and again, until the poor slimy thing sprayed its guts out its mouth and died miserably after hours of torment. Armand's malfeasance only intensified as he grew older. The boy cut off the chef's fingers when he tried to show Armand how to use a cleaver on the meat. He kicked the butler's son down the stairs, leaving the boy paralyzed. Thereafter he snuck into the poor child's room at night, abusing the quaking cripple during the misty hours before dawn.

Whenever Beatrice caught him, she didn't blame "poor little Silas." Instead she blamed the wicked evil father who abandoned them and failed to teach Silas how to be a good man. Armand embraced the condemnation, proud to be the true son of his deadbeat father, and determined to live up to his mother's revulsion. He despised his "brother" and his sniveling hours spent studying alchemy and the healing arts. Armand stepped into his father's role more and more, eventually even punishing Silas for every. perceived misdeed (and often Armand's own horrible acts).

He crushed the boy's leg with a heavy oaken door after he found Silas innocently peeping on a young kitchen maid in the bath. Armand broke Silas' leg like a twig, mangling himself in the process, heedless of his own agony as he reveled in Silas' warbling screams of pain. Armand broke Silas' ribs for refusing to poison his mother's cat, hurling himself down the stairs in disgust. He knocked out his own teeth on the edge of a table when Silas tried to warn a chimney sweep about the bear trap Armand hid in the hearth ashes. Armand knelt on glass for hours every night to toughen Silas up and teach him a lesson.

Most people assumed Silas' deranged mother was responsible for his injuries, shaking their heads and pitying the young boy. No one could ever suspect sweet young Silas was capable of Armand's evil acts. Armand wore his brother-son as a mask, shielding him from the society's selfrighteous hypocrisy.

As time wore on, Armand relied more and more on the mask Silas supplied. On the fateful day when the young man discovered his mother hanging dead from a rope, something broke inside him. Confronted with his mother's suicide, Silas summoned some hidden strength and locked Armand away, pushing his brutish father-brother deep into his mind. Silas vowed never to let Armand torment others again. His evil persona wallowed impotently behind his mask, raging and spewing silent hate.

On that day, Silas became an upright and compassionate citizen of Zobeck. To the outside eye he appears gentle as a lamb and devoutly committed to making his community a better place. But a war rages within him. Not a day goes by Silas does not see Armand's sneering visage loom up at him in a window pane, or in the shifting sea of faces on a crowded lane. His voice mocks Silas in the night ("You are a wart on the ass of my life Silas... How's the leg boy?... What no wife yet, son?... All alone in my bed? Brrrhahaahhaha!"). On cold days Silas still feels the cane blow that broke three of his transverse ribs, and his misshapen leg. heralds the coming rain with a vexing pain that conjures up Armand's drooling leer with every throb. No, Silas is never truly alone.

Armand bides his time, waiting for the opportunity to take his proper place as head of the Armand household.

His opportunity has arrived.

One fog-soaked night a week past, a stranger arrived at Silas' back gate as the Great Stross Clock struck three. The old man was bent and his face warped like something out of a fever dream, but the sibilant whisper, like a serpent's serenade, that echoed from the covered wagon behind him called to Armand like a mother's lullaby. The man had a proposition, the discovery of a lifetime, something Silas had only read about and discarded as impossible myth. The Mother of Gorgons, a queen made slave, whose caress promised bliss, and whose blood held the power to crown a thousand kings.

Little Silas thinks his life is about to become a story book fable. Little does he know that the suffering he's endured before this night is just the beginning of the real nightmare. Armand scents the *blood of the gorgon* and knows for a certainty that a taste shall make him free.

# - No Man Escapes Beath -

# Adventure Synopsis

he PCs are drawn into the investigation surrounding a rash of bloody murders committed in the dead of night on Zobeck's streets, and soon discover there is more to the killings than just another madman on the loose. When their path intersects with a dangerous band of infernal gangsters called the Cloven Nine, the party must get to the bottom of their leader's death or make fiendish enemies. While hunting the killer, the PCs discover a gentleman of Zobeck under attack by hooded cultists of the Red Goddess. Intervening on his behalf they find themselves in Silas Armand's sinister reach. He soon finds a way to mingle the blood of the gorgon with theirs to dire effect.

Murder begin to mount as the PCs intensify their investigations, but even as they nip at the killer's heels they discover a sinister pattern in the slayings. The truth unlocks nightmares. The PCs discover that murder may be something all men and women desire in their darkest dreams.

Poisoned by a strange alchemical blood curse of Armand's design, the adventure spirals into madness and slaughter unless they find a cure. Their investigations all point toward the same cultists who attacked Silas.

The PCs must infiltrate the cult, braving their dark, blood-soaked tunnels beneath Zobeck in the reeking city cartways. There some of the city's aristocrats revel in blood sacrifices and orgies of slaughter, under the command of their strange hooded master and his blood hag mistress. In the battle that follows, the PCs face a horde of zealous blood cultists as well as the freakish abominations their perverse rite birthed into the world. The party soon realizes the cult is under Atmand's evil thumb, but he has fled back to his cloistered apartments in the heart of the city.

Finally, the PCs brave the madman's abode, battling not only the demons of his past, but also apparitions and Armand's experiments. If they piece together the right clues they soon learn that Silas' true face is an ugly one, his heart twisted with evil. They also gain the information they need to break the blood curse plaguing them, but not in time. Armand eludes them once again, fleeing to a clockwork winery over the River Argent, where dread machines fill wine bottles for the entire city with gorgon's blood. Madness will tear Zobeck apart if the party fails to halt his demented plan.

# Hooks

nvolving the PCs with Zobeck's murder investigations is a simple matter. If they are noted heroes, the authorities of the city may appeal to them for aid. Otherwise, the Justicar tasked with tracking down the killer responsible for terrorizing the streets may be an old colleague, friend or relative of one or more of the PCs and send them a missive asking for assistance. If you wish the events of **Blood of the Gorgon** to hit home harder for your PCs, consider some of the following hooks with which to drag the party personally into Armand's evil plans:

#### 1. Distant Relation One or more PCs are distant relations of

One or more PCs are distant relations of Silas Armand, or they are the prodigal son or daughter of Justicar Verdane returned to meet their adopted half-brother Silas. This is a great way to get the PCs involved in the Prelude of this adventure, as they show up to meet their long lost relative and Silas welcomes them with open arms.

### 2. Ill Find the One Who Did This

One or more PCs might have known one of the first murder victims personally. Perhaps they were in love with Lyrana Baravik, or they used to pray with Father Ribali Coterin. Maybe a young rogue PC was hoping to gain entrance to the Cloven Nine and Akad was his sponsor. Perhaps a party member was the blood relative of any of the victims, or an old army buddy of Dromov Baravik, coming into town to catch up on old times with the carpenter only to find him sobbing over his daughter's ruined corpse.

### **2.** Hunting the Hag A PC may have witnessed the gruesome

A PC may have witnessed the gruesome predations of Madam Brisly in whatever village she last fatted herself with the blood of the innocent. The PC arrived too late to



stop the blood hag's murderous rampages, or she eluded the party before they could find her lair, fleeing to Zobeck. Maybe she even took a loved one from the PC there, and now they intend to hack her worm-ridden head off for a trophy. A short lead-in scene or flashback to the village can give the party a sense of just how horrible the blood hag is, foreshadowing their meeting with her later. Ideally, this flashback to a prior adventure ends with the party seeing the hag wearing a mask of flesh.

# 4. Mad Alchemist's Last Words

An old patron of a PC, or their father's friend, or crazy uncle the alchemist pulls them close on his death bed. He whispers a fevered tale about a "Mother of Gorgons" and the terror she will bring on the world if she isn't slain. He whispers of a blood cult who has captured the mother and their plans to turn a city inside out. The old alchemist makes the PC promise to destroy this threat before it consumes the world in madness and slaughter. He wavers between calling the mother a living monstrosity and referring to her as a force of nature or divine principle of some kind.

# The Gentleman Alchemist

his adventure involves the players most viscerally if they meet Silas as the honorable Samaritan before Armand breaks his bonds and takes back control of his body. Consider introducing Silas to your campaign long before the events of **Blood of the Gorgon** begin to unfold. Here are a few ways to bring Silas into your PCs' lives.

# 1. The Charitable Healer

Silas devotes two days each week to tending the sick and downtrodden of Zobeck. He can be seen roaming the impoverished quarters of the city in the deep of morning, his clockwork crossbow at the ready in one hand to defend himself, his healer's bag firmly gripped in the other. He fights disease and debilitation with his potions, offering hope to people forgotten by the rest of the city.

The PCs may cross his path while he is about his Samaritan's business. Alternatively, Silas also offers healing potions to heroes of the city who are wounded in battle against villains or threats to the city's well being. The party may be patronized by Silas, who finds their fight against evil inspiring.

### 2. A Savior in the Night

Silas is no coward. He lives in fear of Armand. His brother's campaign of terror makes most other threats seem inconsequential, and though he freezes in fear when Armand claws at his psyche, he faces down the most dangerous street predators of the Clockwork City's dark nights. One night, when the PCs are beset by some sinister threat or marauding gang, have Silas step out of the shadows to their aid. He fires into the foe with his clockwork crossbow and then draws his sword cane and goes to work. Afterwards, he offers potions to the PCs to tend their wounds.

### Gaining the PCs' Trust

ilas is the perfect face. He supplies Armand with a seamless mask able to fool even the most probing divination magic. Use Silas to cozy Armand up close to the PCs. He may try to involve a cleric PC in his good works, ministering to those citizens of Zobeck ground down by the clockwork city. Maybe Silas helps the PCs root out a corrupt official or three operating in Zobeck and robbing the populace. Maybe he even accompanies the party on an adventure.

To ensure the PCs don't keep Silas at arm's length or become mistrustful, allow a PC to take Armand on as a cohort. No need to tell the party his actual level is higher than theirs; simply tell them he's their cohort. Turning a cohort into a major villain is a DMing coup. If your PCs are particularly paranoid go ahead and give Silas to them with a handful of other cohorts so they don't read anything into Silas' joining up beyond "cool, another a cohort who is pretty awesome." Make sure the other cohorts are as quirky as Silas. If you saddle them with archetypical fighter number one, gnomish bard number two, and a limping alchemist aristocrat with a clockwork crossbow the party might give Silas a little more scrutiny than you'd like. Try gnomish fighter, ironborn bard, and limping alchemist instead.

## Foreshadowing the Fall

ilas flipping from trusted friend to madman villain will personally invest the PCs in the events of **Blood of the Gorgon**, but it's even more interesting to the party if very subtle clues to Silas' problems were there all along. These clues should be easily explained away as other things.

For example, Silas may open up to his friends about his father's abandonment, and how his mother's suicide haunts him. He may even give them a rousing monologue at some point about how he helps the downtrodden of Zobeck day and night with no sleep because he wasn't strong enough to help his mother when she needed him most. It may seem obvious that he serves society so selflessly out of guilt over his mother's suicide.

Of course, the party won't know Armand drove her to madness and goaded her on as she hung the belt around the rafters. They won't know that by "not strong enough" Silas means in his battles against Armand, they will just assume he laments being too young and powerless in the face of his life's circumstances.

Use the same foreshadowing with Silas' obsession with alchemy. Let the PCs know he spends every waking hour in his laboratory chasing some strange formula. If asked about it, he claims he seeks a cure to everyone's ills, a potent mixture that can defeat disease once and for all (this is not a lie and requires no Bluff check, as Silas believes this is what the *blood of the gorgon* will do). Later, when the PCs discover the horror of Armand's true plans for this alchemy, their revulsion will be doubled because this search for an evil elixir was going on under their noses.

### Silas Before the Fall

efore Armand seizes the reins, Silas is an upstanding member of Zobeck's elite. He is a rarity among his kind because he cannot turn a blind eye to the suffering of those less fortunate than himself. Most of Zobeck's upper echelon learns from a young age to pass an unwashed beggar on the street as if they were nothing more than trash. Armand's constant cruelties gave Silas a keen appreciation for the underdogs. His pain has tempered a solid sense of justice within him, and he nurtured a hatred of bullies.

Silas is an upright gentleman whose noble bearing is not diminished by the pronounced limp from his crooked right leg. He compensates for his deformity with a black cane, topped by a silver mastiff. A black hat with a blue band around it tops his fine attire: a blue waist coat, gray gentleman's shortcape, gray pants and black boots. His face is angular, with a sharp jaw and high cheek bones. Silas' eyes are crystal blue, but sunken from lack of sleep.

Most attribute his lack of sleep to his tireless fight against disease and crime, but truthfully, when the sun goes down is when Armand grows strongest. Many nights Silas fears to succumb to sleep, lest his brother embrace him in his deepest nightmares. He fights sleep with alchemical elixirs as long as he can, and when he must rest, he numbs his mind so deeply that both he and Armand are drugged into oblivion.

Silas' full stats are included here in case you wish to use him in the Prelude to this adventure. The personality switch from Silas to Armand and back is a swift action. Note also that Silas remembers threats that Armand makes during the switch, but remembers only great pain and various nightmares when Armand is in full control.

# - No Man Escapes Beath -

#### Silas

LG male human aristocrat 3/ expert 6 Medium humanoid Init +2; Senses Listen +1, Spot +1

**CR 8** 

Languages Abyssal, Infernal, Common, Celestial, Draconic, Elven

#### DEFENSE

- AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 14 (+4 soli-silk cloth, +2 Dex, +3 cufflinks of deflection)
- hp 43 (3d8+3 and 6d6+6) Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +9

#### OFFENSE

#### Spd 30 ft.

- Melee +1 silver sword cane +10/+5 (1d6+1)
- Ranged mwk fold-out clockwork crossbow +9 (1d8) or +9 ranged touch (syringe bolts)
- Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft. Special Attacks alchemical bolts

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat Silas does his best to avoid combat, relying on Diplomacy to cool tempers or dissuade foes from resorting to bloodshed. If combat seems imminent, he injects his potions first if time allows.
- During Combat Silas first attempts to disarm his foe. If this is unsuccessful he applies Combat Expertise to full effect and fights only until he can flee.
- Morale Silas is a principled gentleman, but no hero. He fights in defense of others if needs be, but flees danger if he is the only one threatened, using his scroll of *dimension door* to put some distance between himself and his attackers.

#### **STATISTICS**

- Str 10, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 20, Wis 13, Cha 16 Base Atk +6; Grp +6
- Feats Alchemical Mastery, Combat Expertise, Improved Disarm, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (sword cane)
- Skills Bluff +12, Craft (alchemy) +17, Craft (clockwork mechanism) +17, Decipher Script +15, Diplomacy +17, Disable Device +15, Heal +11, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +15, Knowledge (local) +10, Sleight of Hand +14, Spellcraft +17 (+19 decipher scrolls), Use Magic Device +17 (+21 scrolls)



### Silas and Armand

**Combat Gear** 2 *hold person* syringe bolts, 2 *acid arrow* syringe bolts,

1 ray of exhaustion syringe bolt, 1 inflict critical wounds syringe bolt, syringe with tonic of haste and cat's grace, syringe with potion of cure serious wounds, scroll of dimension door, 10 bolts, 5 silver bolts Other Gear soli-silk armor (see page 21), +1 silver sword cane, masterwork foldout clockwork crossbow, +3 cufflinks of deflection, fine attire, hat, soft leather boots, lambskin chemist's gloves (4 sets), monocle examination lens, masterwork alchemists kit and masterwork clockwork tools in a bag of holding, clockwork pocket watch that chimes a children's tune.

#### New Feat: Alchemical Mastery

Your in-depth study of the most obscure and forbidden secrets of alchemy gives you awesome power over distilled elements and the ability to create magical formulas beyond most alchemists' dreams.

**Prerequisites:** Craft (alchemy) 5 ranks, Spellcraft 5 ranks, Use Magic Device 5 ranks

Benefits: You can create magical formulas from any potion or scroll that comes into your possession. By studying the potion or scroll for one day per spell level and succeeding on a Spellcraft check (DC 15 + 2 times the spell's level) you discern a formula by which you can reproduce the spells effects in an elixir. You may now create potions as if you had the Brew Potion feat (paying XP to do so exactly as that feat details). Doing so requires a Craft (alchemy) check (DC 15 + 2 times the spell's level), with one notable exception: you may reproduce effects that can affect one target regardless of how it effects them (a ray spell for example). If the check fails, the XP and time involved are wasted, though this is not obvious until the potion is tried.

Your mastery of the alchemical elements allows you to even exceed the powers of the wisest archmages. You may create potions of spells up to 6<sup>th</sup> level.

In addition you may increase the difficulty of the check to enhance these potions. By increasing the DC by 5 you may create an extended version of the potion (as if by Extend Spell), increasing the DC by 10 you may create an empowered version of the potion (as if by Empower Spell). By increasing the DC by 15 you may create a maximized version of the potion.

Failed Checks: The DM should make all of the checks described above in secret, as failure in either a Spellcraft check (formula) or Craft (alchemy) check (to make the actual potion) can result in disastrous mishaps or alternative effects on the imbiber instead of those intended (see the mishaps table below). Once a failure results, the alchemist who created it may attempt a DC 25 Spellcraft check to discern what went awry and allow them to reproduce this mistake if they wish to.

#### A Few Potion Side Effects

- Extreme Aggression: The drinker experiences near uncontrollable bouts of rage. Any Diplomacy check the drinker makes to resist suffers a -10 alchemical penalty, and whenever they are unfriendly they automatically slide down to hostile and attack.
- Feral Visage: The imbiber's face warps horribly, gaining bestial features of some sort (fangs, a snout like nose, black beady eyes, a sloped brow, etc.). The drinker takes a -5 alchemical penalty on all Bluff, Diplomacy and Gather Information checks, but gains a +5 alchemical bonus on Intimidate checks.
- Glossalalia: The imbiber can no longer speak in their own language, but rather speaks in strange guttural sounds that defy translation by any means (even *comprehend languages* or *tongues*). The drinker cannot cast any spell with a verbal component and cannot communicate effectively verbally with anyone.
- Spasms: The drinker suffers from strange wracking coughs or uncontrollable "muscular contortions, suffering a 1 on all attacks, skill checks and saves until the tonic's effects run their course.

#### Failed Check Mishaps

- Tentacled Freak: The drinker's body bursts open and writhing black tentacles explode outward from them. The drinker suffers 5d6 damage and becomes ground zero for a *black tentacles* effect, and cannot move until the duration expires.
- Like Runny Eggs: The imbiber's body melts and runs like goo. They turn into a spongy mass of bubbling flesh. The drinker suffers as if affected by a chaos beast's corporeal instability power (see *MM*). If not restored by the end of the potion's duration, they become a chaos beast or gibbering mouther (DM's choice) permanently, their mind breaking in the process.
- Unchecked Growth: The drinker grows freakishly increasing one size level (+4 Str and Con, -2 Dex, -1 AC, +2 natural armor bonus, +4 grapple). Clothes and armor do not grow with the drinker, and are destroyed by the sudden growth, causing 1d4 hp damage to the wearer for each point of AC bonus they provide. For example, clothes are destroyed, but cause no damage, while a chain shirt causes 5d4 hp damage as it tears apart.

#### New Weapon: Clockwork Crossbow

These automatic crossbows carry a cartridge of six bolts, and allow the shooter to fire as many shots per round as their attack bonus (or feats like Rapid Shot) allow.

These weapons are delicate mechanisms designed for ease of use and require no Exotic Weapon Proficiency. These weapons must be maintained after every day of use with a DC 20 Craft (clockwork mechanism) check or suffer a -2 penalty on attack rolls. This penalty is cumulative for every day the weapon is not maintained, and the crossbow breaks down completely when the penalty reaches -6. The daily maintenance requires 10 minutes of uninterrupted work.

Loading a clockwork crossbow is a move action that provokes an attack of opportunity. To reload all six bolts is a full round action.

A skilled clockwork master can construct a version of these crossbows that folds up into a small, easily concealed cylindrical shape. These cylinders may even be disguised to resemble a simple metal scroll case. These fold-out crossbows can snap out and be made ready to fire as a free action.

Cost: 1,000 gp (1,500 gp for a fold-out version)

#### New Weapon: Syringe Bolts

These specialized bolts inject their target with a potion contained within them (though they may be filled with acid, holy water, poison, or like liquid as well if the user wishes). If they fail to hit their target, they always break and are destroyed, the potion inside lost. These bolts may be outfitted with a silver, adamantine or cold iron tip (or like metal) to allow them to affect creatures with related damage reduction.

Cost: 20 gp per bolt plus cost of the potion

#### New Gear: Clockwork Tool Kit

A toolkit like alchemist or thieves tools, but for Craft (clockwork devices). Without them, you have to use improvised tools (-2 penalty on Craft checks), if you can do the job at all.

Cost: 25 gp, masterwork 75 gp

# Streets of Blood

The adventure opens on Zobeck, the Clockwork City, under a crimson pall.

o stranger to crime, the recent slayings earn unprecedented notoriety in the city based on their sheer brutality. Each victim is literally mashed to paste and torn apart. The crime scenes have been soaked in blood—seemingly more blood than any one person's body could contain.

The PCs are drawn into the web of murder either as investigators called on by the city's powers, or they are simply happening by Encounter 1 below. They may be returning from a late night carouse in the misty morning hours, where they stumble upon a heart-broken carpenter just as he discovers the dismembered body of his only daughter.

### Gorgon's Blood

hree months ago, the Cult of the Red Maiden came to Zobeck. Under the dread stewardship of the blood hag Madam Brisly, the cult brought a treasured prize with them. It culled more than half their number in the taking, but before their arrival in Zobeck, the Cult of the Red Maiden captured a living specimen of the rare breed of gorgons referred to simply as the Mother.

One of the last of her kind, the Mother of Gorgons' bloodline is both ancient and powerful. Her blood holds the secrets of the ages—all of the power championed by ancient tomes, and reported down through the ages by sages and gibbering madmen alike.

However, her blood is not pure. To distill the raw power the cult dreams of from her blood, the Cult of the Red Maiden requires the aid of a skilled alchemist. Silas' gentle and bookish exterior seemed easy enough to control, and his obsession with the blood seemed more of an asset than threat at first glance. How could the Cult know that Armand lurked beneath the surface, just



waiting for something terrible to set him free?

The Cult's plans were not noble by any means—steal the power of the gorgon's blood and recruit the city's elite with the promise of everlasting vitality, then rule Zobeck from behind the scenes, drinking the life from it like a tick. But Armand's intentions for the city make the cult seem like an order of paladins by comparison.

Armand has no wish to recline and enjoy the power and riches the gorgon's blood brings. Instead he intends to harness its maddening potential and tear the entire city apart, just to see it burn. For too long Armand has put up with Silas as his only kin. Through the *blood of the gorgon* he can create a legion of homicidal terrors, children worthy of his fatherly love at long last. He plans to revel in the slaughter they wreak.

Though chaos and carnage are his end goals, Armand is not stupid and he can be patient when needs be. To see his goal to fruition he must first test his formula on a select group. And so Zobeck begins to bleed and the murders rise.

### **Blood Elixir**

he *blood elixir* Armand creates preys on the darkest urges of those who drink it. Even the noblest souls harbor dark thoughts deep in their subconscious, though they easily keep them under control or dismiss them altogether.

In a good or neutral aligned victim, the blood gives these urges a life of their own, literally creating a blood double of the



drinker. This blood double hides within the body of its host (much as Armand hides within Silas) until it escapes and takes on a hellish life of its own. Generating some semblance of sinew and flesh from thickened blood and alchemical magic, the blood double then acts upon its drinker's most horrifying urges. See Appendix A for details on generating a blood double.

In an evil drinker, the *blood elixir* is far more potent. No double is necessary, as an evil soul's reprehensible urges are always present in their conscious thoughts. Instead the blood bonds to them, turning them into a living envenomed nightmare. In this case the drinker gains terrible power and the ability to act on its murderous impulses at will.

### The Order of the Murders

his outline presents a suggested sequence of events for Chapters One and Two. Your players may experience downtime in between some of these events. They may also choose to investigate and follow up on various leads.

#### Table 1: The Murders

Time	Event
3 Months Ago	Madame Brisly and the Mother of Gorgons arrive.
2 Months Ago	Tysha and Akad become lovers; Silas starts experimenting with the blood of the gorgon.
1 Week Ago	Dromov Baravik receives the <i>blood elixir</i> .
Day One	Scene 1. <i>The Carpenter's</i> <i>Tears</i> —Bloody Dromoy murders Lyrana and Lucio.
Day Two	Father Palkado receives the <i>blood elixir</i> . Dromov Baravik imprisoned?

Time	Event
Day Four	Scene 2. <i>Blood of the</i> <i>Father</i> —Bloody Palkado murders Father Coterin.
Day Five	Tysha receives the <i>blood</i> <i>elixir</i> . Father Palkado imprisoned?
Day 5-8+	Scenes: Vivisected Veteran, Brutalized Brewmeister— Bloody Dromov, Bloody Palkado kill again. Dromov and Palkado still in prison?
Day Seven	Akad murdered; Jazrain disappears.
Day 7+	Scene: <i>Minced in the Night—</i> Bloody Tysha murders johns.
Day Eight	Scene 3. Death and the Devil's Child
Lay Light	Locals start calling events "The Bloody Murders."

### Scene 1. The Carpenter's Tears

Dromov Baravik fought hard in a war against hobgoblins far to the north and retired to Zobeck a veteran who swore he'd never take up arms again. Some believed the bloodshed he saw on the front stole his courage, but those who fought alongside the big carpenter know the truth. Dromov discovered something ugly inside himself in battle: a rage so fierce it terrified even the beastly hobgoblins he faced. Dromov hewed foes limb from limb, and when his goreslick axe slipped from his fingers, he tore the enemy apart with his bare hands and teeth. One night after a particularly grueling battle, his fellow soldiers refused to sit near the carpenter around the fire.

When the war ended, Dromov turned his axe to a different task, channeling the beast inside him into carpentry instead. He married a plain but kindly woman named Salia who gave birth to a daughter. Dromov knew joy. As time grew on the beast within him withered.

The devil chills outbreak took Salia from him six years ago, and Dromov's anger returned. Left to raise his beloved daughter alone, he became a taciturn man once more, nursing a terrible rage at the world within his heart. He battled it every day, shaping steel with its white hot power. When arthritis stuck him a year ago, Dromov sought out Silas Armand's talents as an alchemist. The kindly gentleman prescribed him a weekly elixir to keep the flaring pain under control. Last week, Armand dropped a dose of his *blood elixir* in it, and Dromov Baravik became one of his first test subjects.

Dromov loves his daughter, and he did his best to raise the girl on his own, but she is willful. She has taken to dalliance with a guildmaster named Lucio Patrill, a young man of 19 who was recently elevated to lead the Glassmaker's Guild. Dromov fears Lucio merely toys with her emotions and has no honorable intentions towards her. He does his best to quell their budding romance, but the carpenter work keeps him too busy to properly meddle. He knows the love affair goes on, and does his best to accept it. But in his heart he despises the young man and he feels violent urges towards his daughter for not heeding his wishes.

Normally these occasional dark thoughts would amount to nothing, or at most would culminate in a beating for his 16-year-old daughter Lyrana. However, once the gorgon's blood finds these hidden impulses it fuels them into something monstrous. Dromov's blood double emerged from him last night as he slumbered, and followed his daughter Lyrana as she snuck out of their house for a midnight rendezvous. They met with her lover in a simple room rented by Urszula Shmilinsky, an old spinster who lives as a landlady who hears little and asks less. In a dark alley outside that rented room, the double mangled Lyrana and Lucio to a pulp. It ripped limbs from torso, crushed their skulls with blood hands as strong as Dromov's, and left their grisly remains for the stray dogs.

The PCs discover the scene after the bodies are found by the Watch. Worse, Dromov himself, roused by the commotion and fearful for his daughter's well being has arrived as well, hatchet in hand. He had such terrible nightmares about her the evening before.

The giant of a man is on his knees by what's left of his daughter's head, her bloody tresses covering her ruined face. The watch is closing in around him, and they are under the impression Dromov did the killing himself.



The carpenter keeps screaming for them to "stay away from my baby!" And as the watch edges closer, he grips his hatchet in bloodied hands and a horrible fray ensues.

#### Dromov Baravik (Raging) CR 6

CN male human barbarian 3/ expert 5 Medium humanoid Init +0; Senses Listen +2, Spot -1 Languages Common

#### DEFENSE

AC 10, touch 8, flat-footed 10; uncanny dodge (+2 heavy leather smock, -2 rage) hp 80 (3d12+15 and 5d6+25)

#### Fort +9, Ref +2, Will +6

#### OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft.

- Melee unarmed +14/+9 (1d3+7) or mwk hatchet +14/+9 (1d6+7)
- Special Attacks Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, rage 1/day

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat Dromov doesn't have a plan for a fight. He just embraces the carnage of it.
- During Combat Dromov fights with his hands at first, but if he is reduced to less than half his hit points by lethal damage, he flashes back to the war and goes to grim and bloody work with his hatchet.
- Morale Dromov fights to the death while enraged, and surrenders immediately if his rage is quelled.

#### STATISTICS

Str 24, Dex 10, Con 20, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 8 Base Atk +6; Grp +13

- Feats Improved Bull Rush, Improved Sunder, Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack
- Skills Appraise +2, Climb +11, Craft (blackmailing) +6, Craft (carpentry) +6, Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +10, Jump +10, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +2, Knowledge (local) +2, Listen +2, Profession (miner) +2, Survival +2 SQ fast movement, trap sense +1

#### **Base Statistics (Not Raging)**

AC 12, touch 10, flat-footed 12 hp 64 (3d12+9 and 5d6+15) Fort +7, Will +4 Melee unarmed +12/+7 (1d3+5) or mwk hatchet +12/+7 (1d6+5) Str 20, Con 16 Grp +11 Skills Climb +9, Jump +8 Gear masterwork hatchet, heavy leather smock and gloves, boots, masterwork carpenter's tools, simple gold wedding band.

### - Streets of Blood -

#### Zobeck City Constables (4) CR 1/2

LN female and male human warrior 1 Medium humanoid Init +0; Senses Listen +2, Spot +2 Languages Common

#### DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 15 (+5 chainmail, +1 light steel shield) hp 9, 9, 8, 8 (1d8+1) Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +0

#### OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.

- Melee sap +2 (1d6+1 non lethal) or tipstaff (1d8+hold person DC 14) longsword +3 (1d8+1) Ranged light clockwork crossbow +1
- (1d8 or hold person)

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat The constables circle a foe and call for help. They try not to engage a criminal unless they outnumber them three to one.
- During Combat If they seek to subdue, the constables flank enemies and employ their saps. If a foe proves too dangerous to handle they use their crossbows from a distance or their tipstaves or longswords up close.
- Morale Brave though they be, the constables don't get paid enough to fight to the death. They retreat if more than half their number fall.

#### **S**TATISTICS

- Str 13, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 10 Base Atk +1; Grp +2
- Feats Point Blank Shot, Weapon Focus (longsword)
- Skills Climb +4, Intimidate +4, Jump +4, Ride +2, Swim +3
- Gear longsword, sap, tipstaff, light steel shield, chainmail, boots, insignia of Zobeck Town Watch, signal whistle.

#### Investigating the Murder

Once Dromov is subdued or slain, the PCs are entreated for aid by a constable of the Watch named Havark Boldrin. Constable Boldrin, an obese man whose love of pastry is well known, finds himself far out of his depth with this brutal double murder. He has no leads to go on, and looks to the PCs for help.

If Dromov was not killed in the struggle, he can be interviewed, during which he weeps and swears he has no idea who would do such an awful thing. If any of the PCs suggest he slew the pair himself Dromov flies into a rage and attempts to attack them, straining any shackles or bonds placed on him. He swears he would never hurt his little girl (the truth). Lyrana's fatal wounds spoil any chance of a *speak with dead* spell working. Only a horrible gurgling sound results from casting the spell.

Investigations into the carpenter's background may turn up a tide of evidence of instability and murderous capacity. Anyone asking around about Dromov may encounter some veterans who know him (see Table 2 below). Feel free to make one of these witnesses to the murder be Yallin, the Vivisected Veteran in "The Murders Mount" section on page 15. Others attest that Dromov disapproved of his daughter's affair with Lucio Patrill. See the Clues table below.

#### Clues

If the PCs examine the corpses of Lyrana and Lucio, a successful DC 20 Heal or Search check reveals that many of the wounds are inflicted with bare hands, but some are the work of axe, chisel, and saw... common carpenter's tools.

Lyrana's corpse does not respond to *speak* with dead, but Lucio's does. His spirit is a cowardly thing that offers few helpful answers, and fades away quickly. He refers to Dromov as "the thing with the axe" and "the monster"; he has never met Dromov and cannot definitively identify him. Lucio saw his killer for only a split second before the axe took him in the head.

There are no bloody tracks at the scene. Foot traffic has worn away the evidence.

#### Rewards

Lucio's father, Malovio Patrill, will pay a reward of 500 gp for finding his son's killer.

### Scene 2. Blood of the Father

Father Ribali Coterin, an elderly human priest of Lada, the Golden Goddess, has served as abbot of the Moon's Grace Temple in Zobeck's lower quarter all his life, though he's seen better days. Ribali is almost 90 years old, and though his age has almost put him in the grave six times in the last year, he somehow manages to cling to life. His chosen successor, a middle-aged priest named Palkado with one crippled arm, has long been prepared to assume the duties of abbot, but it seems Father Coterin may never pass.

Palkado was an orphan taken in by Ribali himself. The priest raised him from a boy, and five years ago when his first bout of illness struck, Ribali publicly announced Palkado as his chosen successor.

Palkado has nothing but respect for his mentor, and loves him like the father he never had. But five years of waiting to assume the post have not gone by without a few ill impulses rising deep in Palkado's subconscious. These inklings of hate would have been cleansed by his next confession as always. Sadly, a meeting with Armand changed his destiny. Armand came to the temple under the pretence of Silas' ministrations to the temple's sick. During his discussion with Palkado, Armand tainted the friar's wine with *blood elixir*.

The *elixir* seeped deep into Palkado's mind and found the few violent impulses the pious priest harbored against his mentor. Polluted by the blood, these errant urges blossomed to full blown murder. After evening prayers, as Palkado slept, his blood double trickled out of his eyes, nose and mouth in the night

#### Table 2: Scene 1 Clues

Skill	DC	Results
Gather – Information	15	Dromov's neighbors report the carpenter's anger at Lyrana's dalliance with the young merchant's son. His shouting shook their home and woke up the whole neighborhood more than once.
	20	Dromov was once an axe-wielding milita man. More than a few veterans mumble that the man was a "devil with an axe in his hand" and "the light in his eyes, a kinda hellish evil gleam, scared us more than the enemies' war cries in the night."
Search	20	(Dromov's tiny workshop) Turns up a few tools flecked with blood (left there by Dromov's blood double).
Heal or Search	20	(Requires physical exam of Dromov.) The big carpenter is pallid in complexion, as if he had lost a lot of blood recently and was still recovering
A TONY STORE	1 1 1 1 1	

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and sought out Father Ribali Coterin where he rasped in his bed. The Bloody double cast silence 15' radius, and then brained the old priest with a sacramental chalice. It brutalized the old man's corpse, swinging it against the wall over and over again. His remains were found dumped on the floor like table scraps.

Alarm bells ring out in the lower quarter the next morning when Father Coterin's tattered body is discovered by an elderly priest named Jakub Holdan when Coterin didn't show up for morning prayer. The PCs are either in the area on their own business or quickly summoned to the scene by the Watch.

#### Investigating the Crime

Questioning the priests of the Moon's Grace Temple yields no hard evidence. The abbot's quarters are secluded in one wing of the temple, and no one heard the violent murder, nor witnessed the culprit's entry or escape. Constable Havark Boldrin, again out of his depth, turns to the PCs for aid. If the PCs question Palkado he swears his innocence (true).

#### Clues

A physical examination of the temple though shows tracks of blood all throughout (no Track check required). In the early morning bedlam after the body's discovery, the monks and priests scurried about like frightened mice.

A trail of blood leading from Palkado's room to Father Ribali's quarters (left by the blood double's gory form) was badly disturbed and spread about the temple by the bustling priests' tracks.

### Scene z. Death and the Devil's Child

The PCs are brought into the third murder's scene not by the authorities, but rather by their opposition - the Cloven Nine, one of Zobeck's most dangerous cabals of criminals, whose ringleaders are all tainted with fiendish bloodlines of some kind or another. The Cloven's leader, Akad, was inexplicably found torn to pieces a few nights ago, as if he was performing one of his famed entrail readings on himself.

Palkado CR 6
LG male human cleric 6
Medium humanoid
Init +1; Senses Listen +3, Spot +3
Languages Celestial, Common, Elven
Defense
AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 13
(+3 ring of protection, +1 Dex)
hp 28 (6d8)
Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +10
Offense
Spd 30 ft.
<b>Melee</b> +2 <i>light mace</i> +7 (1d6+3)
Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.
Spells (CL 6 <sup>th</sup> )
3 <sup>rd</sup> —prayer, searing light (+5 ranged
touch), remove curse, remove
disease
2 <sup>nd</sup> —calm emotions (DC 15), heat
metal (DC 15), hold person (DC 15),
lesser restoration, spiritual weapon 1 <sup>st</sup> —command (DC 14), endure
elements, remove fear, sanctuary,
shield of faith
0—create water, detect magic, detect
poison, light, mending
Special Attacks spells
Гастіся
Before Combat Palkado is not a
fighting man. He is wholly unprepared
for combat. If he sees a battle on the
verge, he attempts to discreetly cast
calm emotions.
During Combat Palkado casts
defensive spells and then hopes hold
person and spiritual weapon will deal
with his foes.

Morale Palkado may not be a fighter, but he is a devoted servant of the Golden Goddess and dies in her august service if needs be.

#### **STATISTICS**

- Str 12, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 13 Base Atk +4; Grp +5 Feats Iron Will, Leadership, Negotiator Skills Concentration +9, Diplomacy +12, Heal +12, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (history) +11, Knowledge (religion) +11, Spellcraft +13, Sense Motive +5
- SQ turn undead, Sun and Good domains
- Gear +2 light mace, +3 ring of protection, holy symbol, homespun cotton robes bleached white.

The tiefling was at leisure in his private quarters in a spacious tower atop the Red Queen gambling hall, one of the many establishments of ill repute owned and operated by the Cloven Nine. Akad's upper chamber is a suite, filled with plush pillows,

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Table 3: Scene 2 Clues		
Skill	DC	Results
Gather Information	15	The old priest had been at death's door for over five years, but always clung on to life by a thread. His successor, Palkado, has been waiting patiently to assume the post of abbot.
Diplomacy	20	(Questioning Palkado) The priest confesses that he was plagued by frustration and anger at being unable to assume his post, but he purged himself of these evil urges in confession and prayer.
Track (Survival)	20	A path of blood begins at Palkado's room, and navigates the temple to Father Ribali Coterin's quarters.
Heal or Search	20	(Requires physical examination of Palkado) The cleric is pale and anemic as if he had lost a lot of blood.
Search	15	(Palkado's Room) Reveals a chalice under his bed with traces of blood within it. This is the chalice used to attack Father Ribali.
	25	See Track above.

crushed velvet carpets, a long mahogany bar well stocked with mind-drowning narcotics and spirits. A giant circular stained glass window depicting Asmodeus serviced by a host of horned nymphs is mounted in the wall of the tower chamber. A command word causes the opaque smoke-hued glass circle to shimmer, and anyone within the chamber may gaze out on the rain-slick streets of Zobeck.

20

Akad was a disgusting tiefling, tall and extremely gaunt, appearing sickly and unnaturally pale in life. His face was adorned with many piercings and studs in his lips, ears, eyebrows, nose, and cheeks, and he had black ram's horns curling back

### - Blood of the Borgon -

# - Streets of Blood -

from his spottily shaven head. Befitting his ostentatious appearance, his horns were often bedecked with numerous charms and dangling spell components.

Akad was the master of poxes, bodily harm, diseases, and cures that came at an awful price. Akad exchanged his services for flesh. That is, Akad typically required the client to horrifically maim or scar themselves, and would manipulate the wound so that it would fester and stink. The more attractive the client or the more dangerous the curse requested, the greater the degree of mutilation Akad required in kind.

With Akad's death, the Cloven Nine are stunned at first, unable to believe that anyone dared to kill their lead. Now the Cloven Nine are looking for revenge, and a death for a death. All they need is a target.

The Nine's Master of Eyes, a half-fiendish gargoyle named Cinder (described below), is the cabal's intelligence gatherer and the one responsible for rooting out their enemies and planning reprisals after someone attacks the group. Little happens in Zobeck that escapes Cinder's notice. The hot blooded horned fiend knows that the PCs are already investigating a string of crimes sharing the same modus operandi as Akad's murder. The gargoyle appears out of the midnight air before the PCs, shortly after his master's murder, his red smoldering eyes fixed upon them.

"I know you. I've seen you asleep in your beds, and I've watched your victories and tragedies. I see the city, every footstep, every tear, every drop of blood it spills I know. But now, a simple killer eludes even me... the same killer you hunt. This hunter dared to strike down one of the Nine. If you find him for us, we will make certain he pays for this offense, and we will remember your help. If you oppose our vengeance or cheat us of his suffering, we will remember that as well."

#### Cinder

The Clockwork City has its fair share of crumbling rooftop statues and sentinel gargoyles. Most are stained black by years, and their grim visages watch them from the balconies and balustrades. They swear some of these cracked faces stare. They are right. Some of the black statues on the roofs are very much alive.

The story changes with each telling, but one sage swears that long ago a fiend of great power nested in the spires of Zobeck infesting the city with dark sins and spreading evil like a plague among her people. This nameless devil wed a gargoyle queen one hellblasted midnight, and when they lay together newborns died in their cribs by the dozen.

His horned bride bore the fiend 13 children, their rocky flesh as black as polished obsidian, their baleful cries striking those who heard them deaf forever. They were happy in their own way, and the fiend watched with deranged joy as his ilk learned to prey on man. The 13 hunted by night in the city below claiming skulls and burnt hearts as their favorite toys and feasting on charred flesh in the moonlight. But when their killings mounted, the priests of the Clockwork City called to their gods for justice. And angels answered.

When the fiend and his bride were laid low by celestial avengers, the children of his blood froze, staring down on the city for eternity. They stood against wind and rain and soot, their evil quelled until one day, one of them awoke from his century-long torpor.

Cinder does not remember his life before the Sleep, but he has pieced it together from fragmented dreams, stories, tomes of old lore, and the delirious confessions of a graybeard priest he bled for days on end. His siblings call to him in his sleep, begging to be set free to prey on the people of Zobeck once more. Cinder has not found the secret to unlocking whatever potent ward binds them. But he continues the search.

After a decade of fruitless investigations the gargoyle fell in with the Cloven Nine and rose quickly to their inner circle. His gifts as a spy (granted to him by his brothers and sisters) makes the fiend indispensable in the Nine's constant struggle against Zobeck's many dangerous gangs of sneak-thieves and murderers. He delights in torture and cruelty, and screaming amuses him.

Cinder still seeks one thing above all—the identity of his fiendish father, now long dead.



#### **Dancing with the Devil**

Sometimes in a city as steeped in vile darkness as Zobeck, a hero must dance with one devil in order to catch another by the tail. The Cloven Nine are a source of corruption, violence, extortion and trafficking of forbidden goods throughout the Clockwork City. The PCs enter into the Nine's circle of concern thanks to their investigation of what the city folk now call "The Blood Murders." The Nine are dangerous, but desperate times make for strange bedfellows, and the tiefling criminals are more than happy to sidle up to the party if it helps them track down the one responsible for Akad's murder.

How this tenuous alliance plays out is up to the GM and players. The PCs may learn too much about the Nine's activities in the course of their investigations and become loose ends too dangerous to be left untied at the conclusion of this chapter. In any case, Cinder intends to take the credit for the PCs' own discoveries and may move against them once their usefulness is expired. The PCs may even decide to learn the ins and outs of the Cloven Nine's operations, so as best to eradicate their criminal influence in the city.

If your PCs are more neutrally inclined, one or more character may find a relationship with the Cloven Nine to be a boon. If they can dance with the halfdevils well enough to escape becoming a liability to the organization's goals, they may earn the grudging respect of the fiends and perhaps a few markers they can cash in for aid in a later adventure.

The gargoyle hunts any tidbit of information on his nameless sire. His evil was so great the angels that destroyed him erased any memory of his name from the world as well. The gargoyle dreams of someday calling his father back to Zobeck and waking his evil siblings. In the meantime, he is content to contribute to the Cloven Nine's evil, and values his place among the Nine's highest echelon as the Master of Eyes. If he cannot find Akad's killer, his usefulness will most assuredly be questioned.

This obsidian gargoyle's stony flesh is cracked and chipped, with smoking blood seeping in rivulets from these imperfections.



His eyes are pits into hell's depths, swirling with fire and suddenly glowing to life when he sights prey or his ire is roused. The gargoyle's gnarled horns are huge, twisting above his head like great basalt spires. His talons are long black daggers still stained with the sizzling blood of the last fool to cross him.

#### Akad's Killer

Armand decided to try his potent alchemical poison on someone whose soul was already twisted with evil. Silas has never discriminated in his practice of healing the ill: he helps even the sick and wounded among the city's most hardened criminals. Armand was pleased when a young initiate of the Nine, a woman named Tysha, arrived on his doorstep, wracked by a hacking cough.

Tysha ran away from a wealthy family in Zobeck. She was a bastard, a stain on her mother's honor, and a reminder to her father of a betrayal that bore ill fruit. Both treated her cruelly. After years of this treatment, young Tysha's heart turned black with hate.

As soon as she was old enough to survive on her own, she fled her parents manor and took to the streets. Tysha survived as a harlot with ambitions of gaining power over the simpering men who pay for her carnal service. She is hauntingly beautiful, her fiery good looks only made more tantalizing by the ravages of street life. Even the scar across her

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nose, from a customer who refused to pay and took what he wanted at blade point, only adds to the young girl's allure. Akad soon noticed Tysha; indeed, he became obsessed with her beauty, and dreamed of maiming her perfection. Destroying beauty was the only perversion that still brought him joy.

Tysha plied her charms well to earn a place in his bed. The two became lovers a few months ago, and Akad kept his whore wrapped around his little finger with empty promises of someday promoting her to rule Zobeck's underworld at his side. He of course had no such intentions, and planned to use her for pleasure until she began to bore him.

When the young Tysha arrived on Armand's doorstep, sick from too many nights on the cold and rainy streets, Armand feigned concern. He prescribed an elixir heavily tainted with gorgon's blood.

The blood corrupted Tysha's already black heart. Her slight muscle and sinew turned taut and steely. She gained a hunter's instincts, the ability to smell the blood of her prey a half mile away, the power to rend flesh and bones with her hardened claw-like hands, and her eyes—yellow as a serpent's frightened her foes with their inhuman stare. In this new terrifying form she returned to Akad's chambers above the Red Queen. When Akad welcomed her in, visions of her perfect flesh under his blade dancing in his head, he invited his own savage death in with her.

Tysha's heightened instincts and senses gave her insights to Akad's affections. She could smell the scent of another woman, a wench he had lain with no more than hour before she arrived, and who had not yet left. Second, when he whispered his usual promises of "someday soon," she could smell his lies like a gnoll's stench. In a rage she tore him asunder, and left him pooling in his own blood. Tysha wrenched open the secret alcove where the woman hid and spent her fury upon the temptress who had dared to take pleasure with Akad.

When the rage passed, Tysha realized she could not walk out of the Red Queen covered in blood. She smashed through the stained glass window and leapt into the night to find new prey. Weak sweaty men, whose

# - Streets of Blood -

#### Cinder

CE male half-fiend gargoyle rogue 3 Medium outsider Init +5; Senses Listen +8, Spot +8 Languages Common, Infernal

#### DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 15, flat-footed 19 (+4 bracers of armor, +5 Dex, +5 natural armor) hp 57 (4d8+16 and 3d6+12) Fort +5, Ref +12, Will +6; evasion Resist acid, cold, electricity and fire 10; DR 10/magic Immune poison; SR 17

#### OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft., fly 60 ft.

Melee 2 claws +13 (1d4+6 plus 1d6 fire) and

bite +11 (1d6+4 plus 1d6 fire) and gore +11 (1d6+4 plus 1d6 fire)

Ranged +1 returning flaming hand axe +12 (1d6+5 and 1d6 fire damage)

Special Attacks sneak attack +2d6, *smite* good (+4 to damage), spell-like abilities Spell-like Abilities (CL 7<sup>th</sup>)

1/day—desecrate, unholy blight (DC 14) 3/day—darkness, poison (DC 14)

#### TACTICS

Before Combat Cinder prepares an action to blanket the battlefield in *darkness* and *desecrates* the area if he expects a fight to ensue. He also hides, stemming the flow of his fiery blood to blend in with the darkness and black stone. Cinder also prefers to fly to unreachable heights or force his foes to Climb up to him (making them excellent targets for sneak attacks).

During Combat Cinder blasts good foes with unholy blight and then swoops down to smite good. He hurls fireballs from his necklace if he faces particularly dangerous foes. If not, he hurls his +1 returning flaming hand axe at range, and uses Flyby Attacks. If he faces a single foe he closes and delivers a punishing full attack.

**Morale** Cinder's self preservation instincts are strong. He flees if a fight goes poorly, dropping shrouds of *darkness* to -cover his escape.

#### weapon of choice was wealth, once ravaged her body nightly for a few silver pieces. Now they would pay for their lusts in blood.

Investigating the Crime

If the players agree to aid Cinder they may

#### **S**TATISTICS

**CR 10** 

- Str 18, Dex 20, Con 18, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 11 Base Atk +6; Grp +10
- Feats Flyby Attack, Multiattack, Weapon Finesse
- Skills Balance +10, Bluff +3, Climb +7, Escape Artist +12, Gather Information +7, Hide +12, Intimidate +5, Jump +12, Knowledge (local) +16, Listen +8, Move Silently +8, Search +4, Sense Motive +4, Spot +8, Tumble +12 SQ trapfinding, trap sense +1

Hellfire Blood (Su) Cinder's infernal bloodline is potent. Whoever his sire is the power of his hellish blood burns furiously within Cinder. This blistering heat cracks the gargoyle's body, causing his blood to leak through and scald his foes. The boiling blood burns anyone who touches him (grapples or attacks him with a natural weapon or unarmed attack) inflicting 1d6 fire damage. Cinder's natural attacks also inflict this extra fire damage.

Eyes of the Thirteen (Su) Cinder's dormant brothers and sisters perch on rooftops overlooking balconies, alleys and public squares in Zobeck. They are cursed to remain frozen for all time, but their eyes still see, and what they see Cinder knows.

Furthermore the motionless statues are never seen more than once in the same spot. Some shifting ward placed on them randomly teleports the frozen gargoyles about the city at random times to random locations. Through their ever watchful gaze, Cinder has his taloned finger on the pulse of the Zobeck. Cinder gains +10 to all Gather Information and Knowledge (local) checks made in Zobeck. He can also effectively discern location once per day with a city-wide range. His brethren's eyes can also animate, pull free of their stony skulls and wander the city scouting its secrets for Cinder once per day (treat this as a greater prying eyes effect).

**Combat Gear** necklace of fireballs Type V, potion of haste, potion of cure serious wounds.

Other Gear pouch with 30 gp and a belt made of charred skulls tied together by dire rat tails looped through their eye sockets.

enter the Red Queen's upper suites where the murders took place the night before. Cinder was careful to ensure no one moved anything or disturbed the crime scene in any way.

The gargoyle is a great hunter, and his



strange bond with his rooftop siblings helps him see much of what happens in the city, but he is no clever inquisitor, and investigating human motives sometimes leaves him puzzled. The gang's workers at the club report that one of his lovers went upstairs to see Akad late in the evening—a girl named Tysha, who everyone assumes is the dead woman found in his quarters. The guards at the Red Queen have passed this information on to Cinder, who is under the impression that the ruined woman found with his dead master is Tysha. He hasn't found any clues suggesting otherwise.

Only one of the members of the Cloven Nine know about Akad's other lover—a young human acrobat named Jazrain. The gang member who let Jazrain in the back of the Red Queen every night for his master is Murgral, the Queen's bartender. Murgral is said to have gnoll blood in his veins, and he certainly stinks like one. His long hair shelters enough fleas to suggest some hyenalike hint to his ancestry.

Akad ordered Murgral never to reveal his dalliances with Jazrain, and he fears his baleful master even beyond the grave. Murgral is paranoid and suspects the entire murder was staged merely to test his loyalty and see if he would break his oath under duress. The stinking bartender avoids questioning unless the PCs succeed at an opposed Spot check against his +10 Hide (he simply slips out the back of the Red Queen), and if pressed, only a high Diplomacy or Intimidate check (see table) causes Murgral to let slip what he knows.

The bartender is not the only key to learning the true identity of Akad's dead lover, even if he is the most immediate. Jazrain is a fairly well-known performer in the Clockwork City and after a day or two her absence is noticed.

#### **Finding Tysha**

The party may attempt to find Tysha through *divination*, tracking, questioning whores on the street, or other means. She doesn't want to be found, and if she senses a magical hunt (likely on the first attempt), she purchases or steals an *amulet of nondetection*. However, she also has friends who make confronting her difficult.

Table 4: Scene 3 Clues

#### Location

A *divination* spell can provide Tysha's location or even confirm that she is a murderer, but it can't make it easy to find her. She squats in the upper floors of Zobeck's larger homes, often 4 or 5 stories above ground. She sleeps in the root cellars of the Wheatsheaf Inn, where the thugs and smugglers certainly don't want any strangers rooting around. She pays grooms and potboys to watch for strangers, and she never spends very long in one place, knowing that the Cloven Nine are certainly hunting her. Chasing Tysha down is difficult at best.

#### Likely Hunting Grounds

Placing "bait" in the red-light districts may draw Tysha's attention, but her keen senses require success with an opposed Bluff against her +12 Sense Motiye.

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Skill	DC	Results
Diplomacy/ Intimidate	25	Murgral spills the beans. He suspects the entire murder was staged merely to test his loyalty and see if he would break his oath under duress. Akad ordered Murgral never to reveal his dalliances with Jazrain.
Gather 15		PCs hear tell of an accomplished human female acrobat of slight build (almost elvish) disappearing.
Information	25	A few muttered rumors that the young performer was secretly a lover of Akad.
Heal or Search	20	There was no struggle. Akad has no defensive wounds whatsoever, and he never even drew his trademark barbed dagger. Either he was indisposed and caught unawares when he was attacked (Cinder believes the only way Akad could be slain without a struggle is if he was in mid-coitus when the murderer struck). Or else he knew his attacker and did not expect them to tear him apart.
Search	25	Reveals the secret alcove behind the bar where the Jazrain was hiding. Also reveals a spatter of blood and a tatter of cloth with the same butterfly weave as the dress worn by the corpse on Akad's bed.
	30	The alcove door is damaged, as if wrenched open with great power.

#### **DM's Note**

Anyone who finds the secret alcove knows that the woman in the bed with Akad didn't die there, but rather must have been killed inside the alcove. It is spattered with blood and littered with hanks of hair, some with skin still attached at the roots.

All this should tell the PCs two things: The dead woman is not Tysha, and the murderer was well known to Akad, making Tysha the most likely (and correct) choice. If the PCs made the most difficult check and noticed the damaged secret door, they may be unsure of Tysha's guilt. By all reports Tysha is a slight woman, and hardly able to lift a dagger, much less tear a man apart or wrench open a solid stone door.

# The Manders Mount

The Bloody Murders are just the tip of the sword.

romov's and Palkado's blood doubles find other targets for their pent up rage, and Tysha quickly sets about culling Zobeck's population of paying johns in a chain of murderous escapades. The full details of each of these slavings could fill an entire mega-adventure by themselves. Instead a few possibilities and options are detailed here.

#### Vivisected Veteran

An old war buddy of Dromov's, named Yallin, was terrified of the big carpenter after witnessing his savage exploits during the war. Now the man is found sawed into pieces, his chest opened up like a blood eagle. Yallin served in Dromov's unit (this is well known to any PC who made the earlier Gather Information check to learn of Dromov's military past). This murder offers few clues (see Table 5), but if Dromov is still in custody for his daughter's murder Svoran may offer the PCs a new wrinkle for their case.

On the night the murder was committed, Dromov cried out in his sleep in his cell, in the throes of some fitful nightmare. If he and Palkado are both in gaol, the constables on watch report neither sleeping well, and each looking particularly pale come the morning sun.

#### **Brutalized Brewmeister**

Palkado's left arm barely functions, a reminder of a crippling accident sustained when local brewer Javor Sabb dropped a cask of ale on the priest 10 years before during a delivery. Even though Javor was drunk while on the job, Palkado pardoned the man for crushing his arm, showing that the young acolyte possessed a deep wellspring of compassion. His blood double feels differently.

Palkado's forgiveness convinced the brewer to give up sampling his wares, but the blood double hates him. It decided to break his



neck with a cask of "the good stuff," tear him to shreds and then leave the man in a vat of stout. If Palkado is in custody, this crime should prove suitably vexing to the PCs.

#### Minced Men

Zobeck caters to the wanton lusts of the well-coined. Sad-eyed prostitutes wander the alleyways, and a gentleman of means may enjoy their charms for a silver piece—virtue goes cheap.

Now though, something hunts the clientele of Zobeck's ladies of the night. Tysha slaughters the men who once used her body, paying back their cruelty with blood. Once their prey, now she hunts her former clients in all the most notorious vicepeddling alleys. It's enough to keep Zobeck's married men at home of a night. Numerous gentlemen, tradesmen and others prowling for prostitutes are found torn to shreds throughout the city's lower quarter (Tysha's old stomping ground).

A few eyewitnesses report a slight woman with a demon's eyes is behind the murders. (See Table 5.)

#### Tracking the Blood Doubles

When the party has stumbled around a bit (or if they fail to Gather Information), give them a clean set of tracks to follow to the Tannery (see Clues Table). This requires tracking under moonlight conditions but without rain or other difficulties.

The tracks are always obscured by the foot traffic of kobolds and others walking home before dawn, and thus the blood doubles cannot be tracked in daylight.



# Table 5: Bloody Murders Clues

Skill	DC	Result
Gather Information	15	(Looking into Yallin's death.) On the night the murdern was committed, Dromov cried out in his sleep in his cell, in the throes of some fitful nightmare.
	-20	(Inquiring about Javor Sabb.) Javor Sabb, a local brewer, dropped a cask of ale on Palkado ten years before during a delivery. Palkado pardoned the drunk.
	20	(Asking about dead johns.) A few whores who know Tysha personally attest that she is the killer.
	25	One streetwalker saw Tysha slink into the recesses of an abandoned tannery on the edge of the lower quarter in the shadow of Puffing Bridge.
Heal	20	The amount of blood at the scene of the crime is far too much to be just the victim's own.
Track (Survival)	23	Tracks lead to the Tannery

# Finding the Bloody Murderers

his chapter's progression depends entirely on the PCs' actions and the clues they successfully unearth. It's quite possible that the PCs help the constable Havark Boldrin arrest both Dromov and Palkado for the crimes early in the investigations. The blood doubles need their hosts alive for them to continue their



murder spree. They are content to allow the carpenter and priest to wallow in gaol, but unless the PCs uncovered more evidence, the two murderers are soon slated for execution.

At this point, the blood doubles take action. They attempt to abduct Dromov and Palkado from the gaol and hide them away in the old abandoned tannery they use as a lair. If the PCs are keeping watch on Dromov and Palkado, they face the pair's blood doubles when they attack the gaol by night. Otherwise, the gaol is found in shambles the morning before the execution. The constables on night duty are discovered hacked to bits.

If the PCs learn that Tysha is haunting the old tannery grounds by interrogating the prostitutes of Moonshy Lane, then they may

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rescue Dromov and Palkado there. If not, they must find some other way of locating the killers.

One way to draw Tysha out is for one or more PCs to play the part of a john seeking a prostitute, or simply staking out the area. If a fight breaks out between the PCs and Tysha, she flees to the tannery at the first opportunity, hoping to outfight the party when she is on her home ground.

### The Old Tannery

nce owned by the Raldrog brothers and the site of their leather works, the brothers lost the title to this forlorn place over a year ago. The official reason was "abuse of the workers," though rumors of human skin hanging in their tannery are still common. A few beggars make their homes in the huts and lean-tos surrounding this rotting building.

The tannery slumps by the river side in the shadow of Puffing Bridge, forgotten by the city, and slowly yielding to an army of mold and rot. The blood of the gorgon calls to itself, and those tainted by its evil power feel each other's presence. Tysha knew this wasted tannery would prove the perfect lair and when Bloody Palkado and Bloody Dromov found her, the three of them moved in. They hide here by day, scorning the sun, and emerge nightly to prey.

#### 1. The Approach (EL 6)

The mud here turns to putrid sewer water from pipes spouting from the bank upstream. A dozen wobbly planks span the morass of sloppy mush by the riverside, leading to a leaning arehed entrance in a moldy wall of thick wood.

The boards are slick and unsteady, counting as difficult terrain. Anyone trying to cross these walkways must succeed at a DC 15 Balance check or slip into the mud. Anyone who falls in the sewer-slop runs the risk of contracting filth fever (Fort DC 12, see DMG).

**Creature:** An ornery shambling mound, an aquatic sewage-breathing variant of its species, lurks in the cool muck beneath these boards, snatching rats, runaway children, or homeless vagrants who come too close. The thing resembles water-logged vegetation

# - The Murders Mount -

beneath the criss-crossing boards in the muddy water unless someone succeeds at a DC 25 Spot check and notes the slithery ambulation of its myriad creepers. The mound attacks anyone who wanders within reach, lurching from beneath the boards to attack with a surprise round.

The mound tries to grapple a foe and swim deep into the sucking sewer-mud. It can dive 30 feet down before the ground becomes too solid.

Sewer Shambler: hp 60, *MM* page 222. This shambler's attacks also infect targets with filth fever.

#### 2. Skinnery (EL 8)

Large blocks rise from the ground here, still stained with blood. An armada of blood flies spiral lazily through the thick air here, feeding on a few rotten skins draped over some of the blocks. It's been months since a cow was skinned in this tannery, and the taut dried flesh splayed out here is of dubious origin – some dog, others more humanoid looking.

A small pit against the east wall is filled to the brim with bones. Cattle skulls and bones aren't the only occupants. Humanoid skeletons litter the pit as well.

Carcasses of cattle were dragged here to be skinned when the Raldrog Brothers ran the tannery.

**Creatures:** After the tannery was shut down, this skinnery became the favored feeding ground for a clutch of degenerate ghasts escaped from somewhere far underground. They have long preyed on the beggars who huddle in wind-torn shanties by night. Called the skin-eaters by the vagrants, these ghasts skin their prey and wear the stretched rotting flesh over their own.

When the bloody creations arrived, Palkado brought the mangy skin-wearing ghoulish undead to heel. Now they obey the bloody cleric's commands. The skin-eaters attack any trespassers and feed on their guts. If Palkado hears his thralls battling foes, he casts defensive spells on himself and then joins them from area 3.

Skin-Eaters (6): hp 29 each, see MM page 119.

#### 3. Offices (EL 8)

This ramshackle office is in tatters. A few scraps of bloody papers litter the floor, and a desk lays in splinters. The malls are stained in fresh blood, and the twisted form of an unfortunate vagrant lays broken in half on the floor.

Creature: Palkado keeps his quarters in this chamber, dragging kills back to the office to torment and feed on. Three ghasts (6 if the group includes a cleric) attend the murderer here. On particularly lazy nights he simply orders these skin-eaters to bring him a choice meal, while on other occasions the fury in his blood demands he go out on the hunt. If confronted here, the Bloody priest gurgles as his thick disgusting blood-drinking tongue extends from his bulging throat.

Skin-Eaters (3 or 6): hp 29 each, see *MM* page 119.

#### 4. Tanning Vats (EL 10)

A chamber as big as a great cathedral opens before you. An acrid scent singes the nose, and plumes of yellow smoke waft slowly from a half dozen fat vats, churning with alchemicals. Several catwalks cross about 20 feet above these vats, and hooks and chains hang down from them, several skins draped from them.

Cattle skins hang over alchemical vats to dry in this cavernous high-ceilinged chamber. Acids churn in these vats, though their potency is much diluted, and skins still hang over head, though they are human now—as the PCs navigate the room they see stretched faces and other humanoid features on the taut skins hanging down.

**Catwalks:** The catwalks are badly corroded. If more than 5 hp damage is inflicted to any one square of catwalk, it and the squares adjacent all come tumbling down. Anyone on those squares falls to the floor 30 feet below. Anyone below those squares suffers 2d6 bludgeoning damage (a DC 20 Reflex save for half).

Vats: Anyone splashed by the acid suffers 2d6 damage. Anyone immersed in one of the vats suffers 10d6 acid damage per turn. The vats are Hardness 10, with 30 hp apiece.

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#### **Bloody Palkado**

CE male bloody human cleric 6 Medium monstrous humanoid (augmented) **CR 8** 

Init +1; Senses Listen +3, Spot +3 Languages Celestial, Common, Elven

#### DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16 (+6 natural, +3 Dex) hp 52 (6d8+24) Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +10

#### OFFENSE

#### Spd 30 ft.

Melee 2 talons +10 (1d6+5) and blood drinking tongue (1d6+5 and blood drain)

Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Spells (CL 6th)

- 3rd—bestow curse (DC 16), contagion (DC 16), deeper darkness, dispel magic, speak with dead
- 2<sup>nd</sup>—bull's strength, death knell, hold person (DC 15), silence, shatter
- 1st—command (DC 14), divine favor, doom (DC 14), entropic shield, shield of faith
- 0—create water, detect magic, detect poison, light, mending
- Special Attacks spells

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat Bloody Palkado is a wrathful wretch who revels in slaughter. He prepares for battle by casting *bull's strength, entropic shield, shield of faith* and *divine favor* if he has time (not included in his stats above).
- During Combat Bloody Palkado hurls spells at the PCs while his ghasts keep them busy. If his thralls prove ineffectual, the blood double blankets the battlefield in *deeper darkness*, and then uses his blood sense to hunt his prey. He casts spells at distance but prefers to rend his foes to pieces with his talons in close combat.
- Morale Bloody Palkado does not leave the field of battle until either he or his enemy is reduced to a bloody corpse.

#### STATISTICS

Str 20, Dex 17, Con 18, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 13 Base Atk +4; Grp +9

- Feats Iron Will, Multiattack, Weapon Focus (talons)
- Skills Concentration +13, Diplomacy +12, Heal +12, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (history) +11, Knowledge (religion) +11, Spellcraft +13, Sense Motive +5
- SQ rebuke or command undead, Evil and Destruction domains, blood sense, blood drain
- Gear holy symbol of the Red Goddess, tattered homespun cotton robes soaked with blood.

#### **Creatures:** Bloody Tysha and Bloody Dromov reside here when not out on the hunt. As soon as they detect the PCs, Tysha takes to the catwalks above to lay in ambush and Dromov creeps behind a huge vat of acid, ready to topple it on the party when they move into the room. This affects a 30' diameter burst, and the damage from a vat of acid is 10d6 (Reflex save DC 20 for half).

# Concluding this Chapter

the strange rash of killings on Zobeck's streets abates... for now. Meanwhile, our heroes' descent into horror and madness has just begun.

The PCs were not the only ones observing the activities of Zobeck's night stalking killers. Armand, tapping not only his own sick curiosity but also Silas' scientific interest in the experimental trials of the *blood elixir*, has been using the Mother of Gorgons and his own bloody divinations to keep close tabs on the blood doubles of Dromov and Palkado, not to mention Tysha. These doubles were guinea pigs for his own upcoming transformation. While taking in the interesting developments of his new "children" Armand also becomes fascinated with those who hunt them – the PCs.

If you have introduced Silas to the party well before this adventure as suggested in the Prologue, Armand already knows a great deal about our heroes. Watching them in action for the first time without peering through the blurry mask of Silas's perceptions impresses him. Armand quickly decides that his earlier experiments were a waste of time. The PCs are the perfect new "children" for Armand to raise as his blood-frenzied own.

He may introduce the PCs to his *blood elixir* even earlier if you like, but he definitely does so once they have dealt with Tysha, Bloody Dromov, and Bloody Palkado. If you have introduced the PCs to Silas in the Prologue, he sells them or surreptitiously slips them a few tainted healing potions to begin their horrible infection with the *blood of the gorgon*. Otherwise, he does so after they intervene on his behalf in the first encounter of Chapter Three.

# - Blood of the Borgon -

- Bloody Dromov (Raging) CR 9
- CE male bloody human barbarian 3/ expert 5
- Medium humanoid
- Init +2; Senses Listen +2, Spot -1
- Languages Common

#### DEFENSE

- AC 16, touch 8, flat-footed 16; uncanny dodge (+6 natural, +2 heavy leather smock, -2 rage)
- hp 112 (3d12+27 and 5d6+45)

Fort +13, Ref +4, Will +6

#### OFFENSE

- Spd 40 ft.
- Melee 2 talons +18 (1d6+11) and blood drinking tongue +16 (1d6+11 and blood drain)
- Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft. (10 ft. with tongue)
- Special Attacks Improved Bull Rush, Multiattack, Power Attack, rage 1/day

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat Bloody Dromov hurls himself into the fray without much forethought usually, but under Tysha's tutelage he's learned the perverse joy of a well planned ambush. Dromov hides behind a vat of acid and topples it on the PCs when they enter.
- During Combat Bloody Dromov rages at the scent of prey and lurches into the fight with talons clicking and scraping. He closes to melee and full attacks.
- Morale Bloody Dromov fights to the death.

#### **STATISTICS**

Str 32, Dex 14, Con 28, Int 9, Wis 9, Cha 8 Base Atk +6; Grp +17

- Feats Improved Bull Rush, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (talons)
- Skills Appraise +2, Climb +15, Craft (carpentry) +6, Craft (leatherworking) +6, Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +10, Jump +14, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +2, Knowledge (local) +2, Listen +2, Profession (miner) +2, Survival +2
- SQ fast movement, trap sense +1, blood sense, blood drain

#### **Base Statistics (Not Raging)**

AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18 hp 96 (3d12+21 and 5d6+35) Fort +11, Will +4 Melee 2 talons +16 (1d6+9) and blood drinking tongue +14 (1d6+9 and blood drain) Str 24, Con 20 Grp +15 Skills Climb +13, Jump +12

Gear masterwork hatchet, heavy leather smock and gloves, boots, bloody masterwork carpenter's tools.

#### Bloody Tysha

CE female bloody human rogue 6 Medium humanoid

Init +6; Senses Listen +6, Spot +1

#### Languages Common

#### DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 16, flat-footed 19; uncanny dodge

**CR 8** 

- (+6 natural armor, +3 mwk studded leather armor, +6 Dex) hp 45 (6d6+24)
- Fort +6, Ref +11, Will +3; evasion

#### OFFENSE

- Spd 30 ft.
- Melee +2 wounding dagger +10 (1d4+7 plus 1 Con) and talons +8 (1d6+5) and
  - blood drinking tongue (1d6+5)
- Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft. (10 ft. with tongue)
- Special Attacks sneak attack +3d6, Two Weapon Fighting

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat Tysha hides and lays in ambush of her prey if she is able to control her fury long enough.
- During Combat Tysha rips her prey to pieces with talon, tongue, and blade. She offers no quarter, and flanks with Dromov to use her sneak attack.
- **Morale** Tysha fights in a frenzy, until either her prey or she is dead.

#### STATISTICS

- Str 21, Dex 24, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 19 Base Atk +4; Grp +9
- Feats Quick Draw, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Finesse
- Skills Balance +14, Bluff +10, Diplomacy +14, Escape Artist +14, Gather Information +7, Hide +14, Jump +12, Knowledge (local) +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +14, Sense Motive +3, Sleight of Hand +13, Tumble +13
- SQ trapfinding, trap sense +2, blood sense, blood drain
- Gear masterwork studded leather, +2 wounding dagger.



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# 1Blood of my 1Blood

Not long after their harrowing encounter with the bloody murderers, the heroes interrupt another band of bloodthirsty killers at work.

ultists of the Red Goddess assail a genteel scholar in the night, dragging him into a darkened alley to gather his blood for some awful rite.

When Silas Armand is involved, however, things are not always as they seem. The alchemist has stolen away the Cult of the Red Goddess' most prized possession, the Mother of Gorgons. Without her empowered blood, the cult's plan to become gods on earth is doomed to failure. They entrusted the Mother to Silas in his laboratory, leaving several cultists to keep watch on the "sniveling old alchemist." They had no idea who they were dealing with.

Silas was enticed into working secretly for the cult by the promise of the blood's healing properties (little did he know that Armand's subliminal suggestions put him in this position). Silas would never test any alchemical formula on someone else without rigorous experimentation and then imbibing the formula himself first to ensure its safety (again, Armand preying on Silas' good nature to maneuver the alchemist into imbibing the blood). Silas's first taste of the blood elixir was too weak to invoke any physical changes, but enough for Armand's foul purposes. The blood's corrupting power let Armand loose from the psychic cage Silas had so painstakingly constructed.

In control of his body once more, Armand set to work. He turned the cultists left with him against their former masters by a brutal display of raw power, and those he couldn't sway, he murdered or turned into sick experiments. He sent a few of his turncoat cultists back to the rest, informing them of his "progress" with the elixir, but that he'd need more time to perfect it. Armand has been stalling them for weeks while he tested the elixir on the bloody murderers, but now the cult grows restless and suspicious.

# Chapter III

Word of the bloody murders has reached the ears of the Cult's leader—Madame Brisly, a hateful blood hag. Her dreams of the power of the gorgon's blood clouded her usual acumen when she entrusted the creature to Silas. Brisly suspects Silas of conducting experiments behind her back, or worse, keeping an already perfected elixir from her gory grasp. She plans to punish the alchemist for his betrayal. She sends word to Armand demanding an audience, telling him where and when he should meet a few of her inner circle who will then lead him into the cult lairs.

Armand, no fool, knows full well that Brisly intends him harm, but believes he can turn this to his advantage. The meeting presents the perfect opportunity to bring the PCs under his influence and expunge the irksome cult – by sending Zobeck's latest murderer-hunting heroes to stop this foul threat to the city.

### A Friend in Need

hortly before his appointed meeting time (midnight), Armand sends the following message to the PCs by a courier (see Handout 1):

"I've discovered something terrible. The evil force behind the recent rash of murders and the twisted abominations born of blood has appeared before me. I fear they demand my alchemical services to some nefarious purpose. I've fled my apartments and I'm moving from boarding house to boarding house to escape their hunters. Please meet me in the alley behind Hatter's Rom tonight at midnight. I fear for my life, but more importantly if what I know dies with me, all of Zobeck stands in peril. – Silas"

Armand makes certain to wait to have this message delivered to the PCs to ensure that they have no time to arrive early to the meeting and spoil his little surprise. They should get the note only a few minutes to midnight.

The alley behind Hatter's Row reeks of alchemical rot. The many strange elements hatters employ in their craft are dumped out their back doors nightly to mingle with rainwater and sewage. The residents of the lower quarter avoid this place, but tonight the sounds of several voices pierce the darkness. Finally one voice you recognize shonts: "Leave me be you bastards, I'll never help you!" The sounds of battle break out immediately after.

**Creatures:** A group of Brisly's cultists arrived a few minutes before the PCs under strict orders to bring Silas Armand before their hag leader, with or without his consent. Armand stalls them until he hears the PCs approaching and then shouts his unwillingness to accompany them and draws his sword-cane.

The cultists immediately set to subduing Silas: Armand could hack them to pieces if he wanted, but he's happy to play the part of the feeble Silas, who is no match for three murderous foes. He pretends to be overwhelmed and let the PCs come to his aid. Though they share the same body, Armand's outward expression and physical presence is nothing like Silas. He is a wolfish man with a feral grin and hard blue eyes like the sea in winter. The cane he carries is obviously for show, for he almost lopes more than strides.



### Silas and Armand

Armand is the kind of man who fascinates even as he repulses. His shoulders are rolled forward apishly, and his thick hanging jowls are too big for his face. His attire is well arrayed, a crimson shirt of fine silk, shrouded by a crushed velvet black vest, with a deep blue coat around his sturdy torso. His pants are black draping over polished leather boots with sleek silver buckles.

Armand wears gloves to hide his dirty and unkempt hands, with flecks of blood crusted underneath the nails. He can assume the cow-eyed limping form of his "brother" to fool the PCs. During the battle, secretly roll a DC 30 Spot check for your PCs, and anyone who makes the check notices Armand's true physical power during the battle, though you should do your best to explain it away as a result of the alchemists' desperate fight for his life.

The cultists are a motley crew of some Brisly's favorites. Mad Jenkril, a wiry little man with yellowed teeth, is himself a resident of Hatter's Row, a lunatic whose constant exposure to poisonous ingredients long ago drove his wits away. Jenkril joined the Cult of the Red Goddess when they promised he could kill anyone he wanted and it would only be a blessing to their religion. Jenkril puts the same fervor he used to dedicate to ladies hats to gathering blood by the gallon for the cult.

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Shalroon, a simpering sorcerer and a magister of Zobeck who always wanted to live life on the bleeding edge, is the third cultist Brisly sent. Shalroon is a coward at heart, though he fancies himself a dangerous man. Truth is, anyone he can't work his enchantments on terrifies him. He tries to flee once the PCs arrive, but Armand is sure to let none of the cultists escape alive (lest they spoil his little plans).

The rest of the cultists are a mix of seasoned zealots of the faith (trained in the use of the Cult's signature strangle sashes) sprinkled with a few new converts. These converts are mostly bored or overly ambitious wealthy members of Zobeck's upper class.

#### New Exotic Weapon: Strangle Sash

This light exotic weapon is a length of incredibly tightly-woven silk, occasionally outfitted with weighted ends, expertly wielded to constrict painfully around a victim's limbs or neck.

The sash is often worn as a decorative accoutrement or a simple belt sash, cleverly hiding its lethal capacity. Assassins trained in their use favor these sashes when carrying a weapon would seem suspicious or ostentatious.

The sash only requires a touch attack to employ and inflicts 1d4 damage. Anyone trained in a sfrangle sash's use may also initiate a grapple. Additionally if the sash is used against a foe denied their Dex bonus to AC the wielder may immediately initiate a grapple, trip or disarm attempt as a free action instead of a standard action (also not provoking an attack of opportunity). The sash always confers sneak attack damage on a foe you are grappling with it.

Cost: 50 gp; Weight: 2 lbs

### - Willood of my Willood -

#### Armand

CE male human barbarian 2/ rogue 7 Medium humanoid

**CR 9** 

Init +7; Senses Listen +9, Spot +11 Languages Abyssal, Infernal, Common, Celestial, Draconic, Elven

#### DEFENSE

- AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 14; improved uncanny dodge
- (+4 soli-silk cloth, +2 Dex, +3 cufflinks of deflection)
- hp 90 (2d12+8 and 7d6+28)
- Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +10; dual mind, evasion

#### OFFENSE

- **Spd** 40 ft.
- Melee +1 silver sword cane +14/+9 (1d6+8)
- Ranged mwk fold-out clockwork crossbow +11/+6 (1d8) or +11/+6 ranged touch (syringe bolts)
- Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.
- Special Attacks alchemical bolts, rage 1/ day, sneak attack +4d6

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat Armand relishes the feeling of his potions coursing through him. He injects as many as he can before a fight breaks out if he has time.
- During Combat Armand has all of Silas' grace and poise with a blade, coupled with his own ferocity and power. He adjusts his tactics to the situation, using Combat Expertise against a dangerous foe, or Power Attack and Cleave against several weak ones.
- Morale Armand is no fool and does not squander his life on a hopeless fight. He retreats if reduced to less than 20 hp.

#### **S**TATISTICS

- Str 21, Dex 16, Con 19, Int 13, Wis 18, Cha 17 Base Atk +7; Grp +12
- Feats Alchemical Mastery, Combat Expertise, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon
- Finesse, Weapon Focus (sword cane) **Skills** Bluff +12, Balance +10, Climb +12, Craft (alchemy) +17, Craft (clockwork mechanism) +17, Decipher Script +15, Diplomacy +17, Disable Device +15, Disguise +10, Escape Artist +10, Gather Information +10, Heal +11,

- Skills (cont'd): Hide +10, Intimidate +15, Jump +13, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +15, Knowledge (local) +10, Listen +9, Move Silently +10, Search +8, Sense Motive +11, Spellcraft +17 (+19 decipher scrolls), Spot +11, Swim +7, Use Magic Device +17 (+21 scrolls), Use Rope +6 SQ dominant personality, dual mind, fast movement, trapfinding, trap sense +2
- Dominant Personality (Ex) Armand is the dominant personality inhabiting the body he shares with Silas. As such when he is control he may draw upon Silas' training and skills with ease, essentially absorbing Silas' learned gifts and using them as his own. Armand has access to all of Silas' skills and feats, and even uses his Skills as if his stats were Silas' at that time. All of these skills and feats are listed above for ease.
- Dual Mind (Ex) Armand has two psyches at his disposal. Whenever he is targeted with a mind affecting effect and fails his save, he can force it on Silas, effectively negating it. Armand is also adept at fooling those who cast such spells or effects on them, making a Bluff check against their Sense Motive to pretend he has fallen under their spell. His dual mind also allows him to fool divination effects as if he were Silas.
- **Combat Gear** 2 hold person syringe bolts, 2 acid arrow syringe bolts, 1 ray of exhaustion syringe bolt, 1 inflict critical wounds syringe bolt, 1 poison syringe bolt, syringe with tonic of haste and cat's grace, syringe with potion of cure serious wounds, scroll of dimension door, 10 bolts, 5 silver bolts
- Other Gear soli-silk cloth armor, +1 sword cane, masterwork fold out clockwork crossbow, +3 cufflinks of deflection, fine attire, hat, soft leather boots, lambskin chemist's gloves (4 sets), monocle examination lens, masterwork alchemists kit and masterwork clockwork tools in a bag of holding, clockwork pocket watch that chimes a children's tune (for some reason this pocket watch plays dissonantly off tune when Armand opens it), a small velvet pouch filled with 50 sp and a bloodcrusted human tooth (he put in there for fun and left it in, sometimes he hands it over when paying for frivolities)

#### New Weapon: Blooddripper

The cultists favor these light one-handed melee weapons, which are daggers with a single sharp, curved edge. Their curving blade makes them more easily concealed than a straight dagger, and their single edge is made of finely-honed steel that seems to always find a vein.

Cost: 10 gp; 1d3/1d4 (18-20/x2) Weight: 1 lb. Damage: Slashing

#### Mad Jenkril

CE male human rogue 6

Medium humanoid

Init +3; Senses Listen +7, Spot +4 Languages Common, Goblin, Infernal

#### DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; uncanny dodge

CR 6

(+3 mwk studded leather, +3 Dex) hp 21 (6d6)

Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +1; evasion OFFENSE

#### Spd 30 ft.

- Melee +2 keen blooddripper +10 (1d4+3 plus poison)
- Special Attacks poison (hatter's grimace, Injury DC 17, 2d6 Wis/2d6 Wis), sneak attack +3d6

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat Mad Jenkril does his best to hide and surprise his foes, coating his blade with hatter's grimace to which he is immune
- During Combat Mad Jenkril flanks with other cultists to make best use of his sneak attack.
- Morale Jenkril is too insane to fear death and fights to the end.

#### STATISTICS

- Str 12, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 7 Base Atk +4; Grp +5
- Feats Combat Expertise, Improved Feint, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (blooddripper)
- Skills Appraise +4, Bluff +7, Climb +6, Craft (ladies hats) +6, Craft (alchemy) +6, Escape Artist +12, Forgery +6, Gather Information +5, Hide +12, Jump +6, Knowledge (local) +7, Listen +7, Move Silently +12, Profession (haberdasher) +4, Search +7, Sense Motive +3, Spot +4
- SQ limited poison immunity (hatter's grimace), trapfinding, trap sense +2 Combat Gear +2 keen blooddripper, masterwork studded leather.

#### New Armor: Soli-Silk Cloth

This newly introduced protection made of foreign weave is all the rage in Zobeck suddenly. This light armor provides all the benefits of a chain shirt without an armor check penalty and has only a 10% spell failure chance.

Cost: 2, 000 gp.

#### It's Good to be Rich

Most of the newly converted cultists are aristocrats (denoted as Converted Aristocrats). These dandies, magisters, and children of rich merchant families have access to incredible wealth beyond the scope of most 3<sup>rd</sup> level non-player characters. They probably squander their allowances or the interest on their investments on ridiculous magic items. Until they joined up with the Cult of the Red Goddess, they had no real practical use for these items, but now they can finally break these dangerous weapons out and play with them. Consider giving a few of the Converted Aristocrats some fun toys to employ against the PCs, to make encounters with them tactically and cinematically interesting.

To avoid unbalancing your campaign, make most of these items one use, limited use or charged items. Here are a few good choices:

- ring of ram (8 charges remaining),
- bead of force,
- elemental gemstone,
- horn of blasting (be sure they just keep blowing it, running the risk of destroying it),

**CR 8** 

- rope of entanglement,
- necklace of fireballs, or
- a cheap ioun stone (see KQ #6 for new stones).

Give a different magical trinket out each time to keep things chaotic and fun for your players (and to give them varied and interesting loot if they are able to take out these cultists before they can use their trinkets).

**CR 6** 

#### Malrog

CE male bugbear rogue 3/fighter 4 Medium humanoid

Init +7; Senses darkvision 60 ft,

- Listen +5, Spot +5
- Languages Common, Goblin

#### DEFENSE

- AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16; uncanny dodge
- (+3 natural, +3 mwk studded leather, +3 Dex)
- hp 65 (3d8+6 and 3d6+6 and 4d10+8) Fort +8, Ref +10, Will +5; evasion

#### OFFENSE

#### Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk strangle sash +15/+10 (1d4+7)

Special Attacks sneak attack +3d6

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat Malrog hides and then slinks from the shadows to strangle his prey. He has yet to show himself in the alley and is hiding when the PCs enter.
- During Combat Malrog chokes away with his sash, doing his best to disable spellcasters first.
- Morale Malrog is a zealot and fights to the death.

#### STATISTICS

- Str 20, Dex 16, Con 15, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 7 Base Atk +8; Grp +13
- Feats Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (strangle sash), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (strangle sash), Weapon Specialization (strangle sash)
- Skills Climb +9, Hide +11, Jump +8, Listen +5, Move Silently +15, Spot +5, Use Rope +8

SQ trapfinding, trap sense +1 Combat Gear masterwork strangle sash, masterwork studded leather.

#### Shalroon

CE male human sorcerer 6 Medium humanoid Init +1; Senses Listen +1, Spot +1 Languages Common

#### DEFENSE

AC 15, touch 11, flat-footed 14 (+4 mage armor, +1 Dex) hp 22 (6d3+6) Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +8

#### OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft. Melee +1 dagger +3 (1d4) Special Attacks spells Spells Known (CL 6<sup>th</sup>)

- 3<sup>rd</sup> (4/day)—hold person (DC 18) 2<sup>nd</sup> (6/day)—scorching ray (+5 ranged touch), hideous laughter (DC 17)
- 1\*\* (7/day)—charm person (DC 16), mage armor, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement (+5 ranged touch)
- 0 (6/day)—arcane mark, daze (DC 15), detect magic, ghost sound, light, mage hand, read magic

#### TACTICS

Before Combat Shalroon gets as much distance from his foes as possible (he is terrified of combat) and casts *mage armor* on himself.

During Combat Shalroon relies on enchantment magic first; if this fails he resorts to rays and magic missiles.

Morale Shalroon flees if he is reduced to less than 10 hp.

#### **S**TATISTICS

Str 8, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 16 Base Atk +3; Grp +2

- Feats Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Iron Will, Spell Focus
- (enchantment), Weapon Focus (ray) Skills Bluff +12, Concentration +10,

Knowledge (arcana) +5, Spellcraft +6 SQ summon familiar

Combat Gear +1 dagger, red robes.



#### Converted Aristocrats (4) CR 2

NE female and male human aristocrat 3 Medium humanoid Init +2; Senses Listen +5, Spot +5 Languages Common

#### DEFENSE

AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14 (+4 mage armor, +2 Dex) hp 22 (3d8+6) Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +5

OFFENSE

- Spd 30 ft.
- Melee +1 rapier +6 (1d6+1)

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat The cultists drink their potions of mage armor.
- During Combat The cultists flank foes and go to work with their rapiers or use their magical trinkets to dire effect (see above).
- Morale These cultists are less zealous than the rest, seeing the Cult of the Red Goddess as more of a dalliance with danger or a way to reap the rewards of immortality. You can't reap the rewards of immortality if you're already dead. They flee if reduced to less than 5 hp.

#### STATISTICS

Str 10, Dex 14, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 13 Base Atk +2; Grp +2

- Feats Iron Will, Weapon Finesse,
- Weapon Focus (rapier)
- Skills Bluff +6, Diplomacy +4,
- Disguise +8, Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +5, Sense Motive +4, Spot +5
- Combat Gear +1 rapier, potion of mage armor, magical trinket.

#### New Poison: Hatter's Grimace

Injury poison, Fort DC 17, 2d6 Wis/ 2d6 Wis, cost 3,000 gp per dose

## - UBlood of my UBlood -

#### Cultists (5)

CE male human rogue 2/fighter 1 Medium humanoid Init +1; Senses Listen +1, Spot +6 Languages Common

**CR 3** 

#### DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+3 mwk studded leather, +1 Dex) hp 14 (2d6 and 1d10) Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1; evasion

#### OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk strangle sash +6 (1d4+2) Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat The cultists hide in the shadows and hope to ambush their prey.
- During Combat The cultists flank and employ their sashes, ganging up on foes.
- Morale These zealous cultists fight to the death.

#### STATISTICS

- Str 15, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 10 Base Atk +2; Grp +4
- Feats Die Hard, Endurance, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (strangle sash), Weapon Focus (strangle sash)
- Skills Balance +8, Climb +5, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +6 (+8 bindings), Hide +6, Jump +9, Move Silently +6, Spot +6, Tumble +8, Use Rope +6

SQ trapfinding, trap sense +1 Combat Gear masterwork strangle sash, masterwork studded leather.

### The Murders Continue

hortly after the PCs encounter Armand and the cultists, the Bloody Murders begin anew, and once again the authorities of Zobeck come calling. The constabulary is at a loss and begs the PCs for aid in solving this new outbreak of murders, but this time, the evidence the party turns up is disturbing.

### Dark and Bloody Dreams

alf the fun of this adventure is the PCs' own spiral into evil. After imbibing the *blood elixir* in the healing potions Armand gave or sold them (see page 18), they spawn blood doubles, but traces of the evil alchemical infusion still run in their veins. The link between a good drinker of the *elixir* and their blood double is very potent and does not fade after the double separates from them (quite the opposite actually). The blood double needs its "master" to survive, feeding off their thoughts of violence.

A fun way to play this up is that after the PCs have drunken the *elixir*, people they know, friends, family members, acquaintances, perhaps even an old beggar who accidentally stepped on their heel in the streets begin to turn up dead—victims of the PCs' own blood doubles. Meanwhile, the PCs begin to experience terrible nightmares.

If you set up Silas/Armand in the Prologue and want to begin the PCs own blood doubles earlier, feel free to make them active in Chapter One. This has several advantages. The PCs, having not yet met the blood doubles of Dromov and Palkado, will be far more surprised to learn they too have them. Also, having not encountered the other blood doubles means the PCs may even believe they are committing the murders themselves.

This element of Blood of the Gorgon works best if you set up some subconscious reasons for these murders beforehand. Perhaps a commander is forced to pass a fighter or paladin PC over for promotion to avoid a political problem. The commander explains their regret over this decision and commiserates with the PC about this, but subconsciously the character can't get over it, and it festers, becoming the perfect fuel for the blood elixir. Perhaps a PC's lover has made the character jealous. Perhaps a mage messes up an important enchanted item. Maybe a sibling inherits more in their parent's will than the PC does. Many motivations could spark the PCs' blood double to kill.

Let the PCs investigate these crimes, but all evidence they find points only towards themselves. Their blood double chooses people only the PC has a good reason to want dead. Generate blood doubles for the PCs using the rules in Appendix A and hold on to them. The showdown between the PCs and their doubles will come in Chapter 4 of this adventure. As the party becomes frustrated with their descent into darkness, Armand, playing the part of the concerned friend, intervenes on their behalf.

## The Dead Justicar's Testimony

rmand's stepfather, Justicar Verdane, kept a mountain of files on the criminal cases that crossed his desk during 40 years of service. He collected many of them in a special chest with the words "Unsolved Strangeness" scrawled across it. Silas used to enjoy perusing its contents, enthralled by stories of suspected vampire attacks, lycanthropic murders, robberies committed by specters, and even a conspiracy involving a wolf-demon who supposedly lives beneath Zobeck's streets.

Armand noted these cases too and now finds one particularly useful. This account tells of a series of bloody attacks by a horrific blood hag, a gore-slurping abomination who preys on the blood and souls of her prey. Armand has met Madam Brisly once and he recognized the horrifying hag as the same kind of monstrosity mentioned in one of his step father's unsolved cases. Now, he plans to present this information to the PCs and tell them he's met this very monster face to face, and believes she is the true architect of the Bloody Murders. Worse, he may convince the PCs that eliminating Brisly is the key to their own salvation.

Once again, Armand contacts the PCs begging them to meet him in a smoky tavern called "The Blackened Fish." This small tavern by the river has a strange mix of clientele smugglers and slumming nobles, both drawn to the cook's repast of wildly spicy flounder and barley. At the Blackened Fish, almost everyone smokes rich marshweed from ornately carved pipes, giving rise to the clouds of smoke that give the tavern its name. In the back corner of the Fish, Armand awaits the party. He thanks them again for their intervention on his behalf when the cultists attacked, and then inquires about the new murder investigations.

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If the PCs confess their consternation, or admit that most evidence points towards themselves, Armand shakes his head and says: "You are no murderers... something more sinister is at work here, and I think I know what it is." At this point, Armand hands the PCs the following statement taken from Elsbeth Svoran the day after her brother's bizarre death over 20 years past.

Give the players Handout 2. This is from the Records of Justicar Verdane, High Magistrate of the Free City of Zobeck:

Radomir was not himself for weeks before that night. His usual fair pallor had surrendered to a positively chalky cast. Day after day he appeared more porcelain, and the children began to tease him. He was listless in mornings and by afternoon his breath came in a wet gurgling wheeze as if he were struggling to keep from drowning. His fingers shrank, receded to thin stubs, like the twiggy branches of our new mulberry tree. His eyes were not his own, yellow craggy lines marring his once shining whites, as if they should be bloodshot, but his blood was in short supply. No healer could restore his vitality, and we paid good coin to more than a dozen of the Golden Goddess's finest.

That night I heard the hideous sounds from his chambers. Wet slourching, like a thirsty dog at his water bowl, punctuated with the occasional piteous, animal moan from Radomir. When I opened the doors, she hunched above him, her taloned feet dug into the headboard, her ragged bloodspattered dress draped over a misshapen, only vaguely feminine form. She snapped her head up at the sound of the latch, and a twisted face glared at me with black pupiless eyes, like wells of starless midnight. Her hair was perhaps her most disgusting feature... thick strands like long worms, wriggling of their own accord and weeping blood down her face, shoulders and back. Her hair mewled, high-pitched, like a basket of hungry kittens, and strained to reach Radomir.

The haggard demon-faced crone stood slowly, and I saw Radomir. His head was a pulpy ruin, his bloody skull gaping up at the monstrous woman above him, his eyes, no flesh around them, rolling madly in their sockets. It was only then that I realized she held his face in one of her red-taloned hands, its toothless mouth working in time with the moans from his bloody skull.

I screamed when she came for me, and that is all I remember before you woke me in the hall.

Armand tells the PCs that when the cultists first came to him, their leader was present – a bloody hag fitting the description in the files he gave them (true). Armand tells the PCs he remembers his step father being particularly haunted by this case – claiming the murderess had "the power to twist men's minds and make them into killers without them even remembering their foul deeds" (a lie). Armand does not press the PCs for details about their harrowing investigations, even though he's dying to know how the *blood elixir* is working on their tormented minds.

### Baiting the Red Goddess

f the PCs captured one of the cultists who attacked Armand behind Hatter's Row alive and managed to break them, they already know how to enter the cultists' lair. If not, Armand is willing to lend them a hand.

Armand suspects the cultists are behind a rash of disappearances in the city (true), and he knows they have been hunting him ever since they attempted to abduct him behind Hatter's Row. Armand claims he has kept out of sight and away from his apartments since the attack. Indeed, Armand has been carrying on as he pleases, committing atrocities at will, and conducting demented experiments below his apartments.

Armand tells the PCs he can help them, as repayment for how they came to his aid behind Hatter's Row. He pretends he is willing to play the part of hero by offering himself up as bait to lure these evil cultists out of the shadows so the party can track them to their lair.

This is a set up. Armand instructs six of his own loyal cultists to attack him as he walks the streets and then flee to an old abandoned well in the lower quarter, one of the major access points the cultists use to reach their

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underground lair beneath the streets of Zobeck.

After their meal at the Blackened Fish, Armand decides to take a stroll down to the lower quarter where he used to tend the sick before he went into hiding. A shanty town of indigents and addicts in the shadow of a smoky foundry was one of Silas' most common haunts, where his humanitarian efforts could reach the neediest citizens.

The agents of the Red Goddess are looking for Armand, but the six waiting in the wings by the foundry are loyal to the mad alchemist now and acting under his orders. They spring their ambush from a rotten wooden staircase clinging haphazardly to the soot-stained wall of the old foundry.

**Creatures:** Originally, Brisly assigned eight of her cultists to keep watch over Armand as he toiled on the Mother of Gorgons. Two refused to turn against their mistress and ended up freakish experiments under Armand's sick ministrations. The other six quickly agreed to serve the madman.

The leader of this band is Tolos Grimgranite, a disgraced dwarven clanlord's son of the Ironcrags. Tolos was exiled after his people discovered he was behind a series of vicious murders in their clanhold. His father's power was the only thing that saved Tolos from death in the delver pits, but should he ever return to his home, he won't escape that fate twice. Wandering, his hands nailed to a post across his back, he collapsed by a farm house where Brisly and her cultists had just slaughtered the resident family of six. Brisly freed the dwarf and took his oath of allegiance, but the clan prince soon chafed under her command. Armand offered the exile a far more tantalizing prize. When his blood elixir is perfected and Zobeck falls into anarchic carnage, the alchemist will give Grimgranite a cask of the elixir with which to infect his old clanhold's water supply up in the Ironcrags.

The rest of the cultists are a mix of sneak thieves and foppish nobles (a few of whom knew Silas prior to their involvement in the cult). The cultists are all under orders to attack Silas and draw the attention of the PCs, then flee to other side of the foundry and make a break towards the old abandoned well used by the cultists.

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**CR 3** 

#### Tolos Grimgranite

CE male dwarf fighter 8 Medium humanoid Init +6; Senses Listen +1, Spot +1 Languages Common, Dwarven

#### DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 16, flat-footed 20 (+2 mithril breastplate, +2 Dex, +3 shield of faith)

hp 53 (8d10+8) Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +4

#### OFFENSE

- **Spd** 20 ft; 50 ft w/*expeditious retreat*  **Melee** +2 *sickle* +10/+5 (1d6+9/15-20) and +2 *sickle* +10 (1d6+6)
- Special Attacks Power Attack, Two Weapon Fighting

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat Tolos hides on the staircase near the top of the foundry works' wall and readies his heavy crossbow. When he spots Armand or the PCs approaching, he drinks both his potions.
- During Combat Tolos fires on Armand (purposefully missing) flees into the foundry works. He runs across the foundry works catwalks to the opposite side and then slides down an old pipe (DC 15 Climb check). If anyone catches up to him, he quick draws his sickles and fights.
- Morale Normally Grimgranite would fight to the death, but he is under strict orders by Armand to surrender if reduced to less than half his hit points.

#### **STATISTICS**

- Str 20, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 10 Base Atk +8; Grp +13
- Feats Greater Weapon Focus (sickle), Improved Critical (sickle), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (sickle), Weapon Specialization (sickle)
- Skills Climb +9, Intimidate +6, Jump +9, Swim +5

SQ dwarf traits

**Combat Gear** +2 mithril breastplate, pair of +2 sickles, mwk heavy crossbow, 10 +1 wounding bolts, necklace of severed fingers, potion of shield of faith (CL 6<sup>th</sup>), potion of expeditious retreat.

#### Cultists (3)

**CR 8** 

#### hp 14, see page 23.

- Before Combat The cultists drink their potions when they spot Armand and then hide in the shadows on the catwalk and wait for the PCs.
- During Combat When Tolos runs by the cultists leap from the shadows and employ their strangle sashes.
- Morale These cultists now revere Armand as zealously as they once did Brisly. They fight to the death on his orders simply to make the set up seem real.

#### Converted Aristocrats (2) CR 2 hp 22, see page 22.

- Before Combat The aristocrats drink their potions when they spot Armand and then hide in the shadows on the roof of the foundry.
- During Combat When Tolos runs the aristocrats attack the party as they ascend the stairs.
- Morale The aristocrats are not as zealous and they surrender if reduced to 11 hp. They happily give up information on the cult and even offer to help the PCs infiltrate the lair of Madam Brisly.

**Development:** Once the PCs have Grimgranite in custody he spills everything he knows about the cult, begging for his life. He points out the abandoned well entrance to the PCs if they caught him long before he got there, though out of spite he conveniently "forgets" to warn them about the horrific otyugh guardian that resides in the sewage clogged chambers underneath the well and area 6, or the things craving tender halfling meat.

If any of the converted aristocrats survived they are under orders by Armand to help the party infiltrate the cult's lair if they chose that route. The PCs are now equipped with several cultists' robes and white masks with red tears.

### Infiltrating the Cult

eaping down the abandoned well with swords drawn and wands at the ready is one way to tackle these depraved blood cultists. However, the PCs may wish to adopt a more subtle approach. If they haven't slaughtered them to the last, Tolos and his fellow cultists prove useful tools. Once defeated they are compliant with the PCs demands (as per Armand's request), and can offer the PCs the opportunity to infiltrate the sewer hideout of the Cult of the Red Goddess.

If the PCs dress the part they can fool many of the blood worshippers at a glance. To avoid further scrutiny they must break the little finger on their left hand, a painful but otherwise none too injurious maiming that members of the cult use to identify one another. Tolos gladly informs the PCs of this identification method if they haven't already noticed it.

Where applicable, in some of the areas of the Undercity Lair below a short "Infiltration" section details the reactions of cultists lurking there.

# Madam Brisly and the Cult of the Red Goddess

Il manner of secrets fester in the sprawling complexes beneath the Clockwork City: Sewers, catacombs, abandoned mines whose veins of silver have long since run dry, and underground cartways once used to travel the city. Sinkholes sometimes claim whole tenements when the swollen wooden beams supporting them are eaten away by rot and worms. These collapses are the least of the threats this Undercity poses. Ancient necropolises conceal the lingering dead and those whose business is best done far from the light of day gather in the sewer tunnels to divvy up blood money or plot a murder.



### Cultists of the Red Goddess

Barghests, wererats, and worse prowl the underbelly of Zobeck, but the newest addition to this menagerie of evil is the Cult of the Red Goddess. Most of its members are humans, and some of the city's finest sons and daughters are counted among its orgiastic clergy and flock. The inner circle knows that their leader, the Mistress of the Blood, is a terrible abomination—a demented cronelike monstrosity known as a blood hag (see Appendix A).

She is fond of calling herself Madam Brisly. Some of the older cultists claim it's the surname of her adopted family when she was hidden among mortals as a child, and whose blood she first feasted on when she was but a young girl. Brisly fell in love with the Red Goddess as an acolyte in a small but bloody assembly in the distant city of Harkasa. As the young hag's true nature revealed itself, the leader of that small cult cell declared her a chosen one of the Goddess. It was just the leverage she needed to depose her and feast on her blood.

The cult grew quickly under her grisly example, and absorbed a tribe of bugbears who had long harassed Harkasa. Madam Brisly's red star was rising and it seemed

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nothing could stop her. Then a band of meddling adventurers arrived and tore her beloved cult to shreds. Brisly escaped with her most loyal followers and roamed the countryside for a time marauding and raiding small homesteads.

Madam Brisly soon learned that the city of Zobeck had once suffered a rash of attacks matching her own modus operandi. She became obsessed with the idea that her true mother was somewhere in the city, and she moved her cult into the tunnels beneath Zobeck in hopes of both building the cult's strength slowly and tracking down any word of her "mother's" fate.

In a forlorn ancient tunnel beneath the Clockwork City, shrouded in strange miasmas, Brisly found the Mother of Gorgons. The creature was wounded, its neck and wrists badly scarred from some tormentor's bonds, perhaps the prized exhibit of some physiker. Brisly took the discovery as a great portent from the Red Goddess, as her own personal quest to find her "mother" had led her to this creature whose blood was rumored to be one of the most potent alchemical elements.

The Mother of Gorgons soon traded one tormentor for another. Though it cost a dozen cultists their lives, Brisly trapped the creature, veiled her petrifying reptilian eyes, and bound her with heavy shackles. Her own experiments with the Mother's blood only left its imbibers purpled and dead, or mad beyond measure and twisted with deformities. After squandering the lives of dozens of captives, Brisly realized the art of an alchemist woudl be required to distill the true power of the blood from its more deadly agents.

The Mother went to Armand and now Brisly regrets underestimating him. One attempt to bring the alchemist before her has failed already, and the cultists she left to guard the man's endeavors have not reported to her in weeks.

While Brisly plots, she fears to take bold action. She has learned that a band of meddlesome adventurers is interested in Armand and her past experiences with motivated adventurers make her wary. She has no wish to see the cult torn down before

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her bleeding eyes. For now she plots and plans how best to deal with this new threat and how to safely recover the Mother of Gorgons from the sniveling alchemist who has somehow foiled her at every turn.

Sadly for Brisly, Armand lashes out at her once more, this time directing the very adventurers she fears right into the heart of her cult's lair.

### The Undercity Lair of the Cult

elow the abandoned well, a series of subterranean tunnels, necropolis chambers, sewers and the old kobold cartways serves Brisly as a lair. The terrain suits her purposes and her cult's bloody practices beneath the streets.

Area General Features: Noise echoes strangely in these tunnels making Listen checks difficult (-5 to discern the direction sounds are coming from). In addition many of these chambers fester with foul miasmas wafting from the stagnant sewer waters underneath this level. Anyone entering this lair must make a DC 10 Fortitude save or be nauseated for five minutes, whereafter they receive another save.

Anyone who makes a save against these miasmas grows accustomed to these foul fumes and suffers no nausea for 24 hours, though they run the risk of contracting filth fever (see *DMG*) every six hours they spend here. The cultists ward off this debilitating illness by wearing masks treated with pungent caustic agents. While the caustic smells assail the nose, they also dispel diseased vapors; any masks the PCs claim from cultists are so treated.

#### 5. Abandoned Well Shaft (EL 7)

The constant drip of water is the only sound echoing from the void below you. Darkness reigns down this shaft. The walls are slick with moss and mud.

This shaft is one of the cult's secret entrances into their lair. A DC 15 Search check reveals clever handholds that allow anyone to make a DC 10 Climb check to descend the shaft. **Creature:** The cultists have had problems with a particularly ornery clutch of otyughs that lurk in the sprawling open cesspit beneath the old well. Zobeck has its fair share of these troublesome menaces, though most prefer carrion or rotting garbage to a live creature.

The otyughs under the cult's lair have feasted on blood-tainted refuse and the chopped up bits of the cult's victims, all hastily disposed of in the cesspit. Now they have a taste for blood and man flesh and attack the cultists when they climb the well shaft. The cultists have taken to distracting the things with the dismembered body of a captive or a bucket of blood, which incite the otyughs to fight among themselves. At present the aberrations haven't been fed in several days; when they hear the PCs moving they spring up from the sewage to attack.

The otyughs do their best to grapple a PC and then drag them into the putrid waters below. If attacked in earnest the disgusting things swim below area 6 and eventually " harass the PCs through the sewer drains in the floor.

Otyughs (3): hp 36, MM page 204.

#### 6. Miasmic Conflux (EL Varies)

The walls of this underground chamber are carved with what must have once been cityscapes of Zobeck. They are mostly eroded to smooth bumps or marred with ugly spider-webs of cracks and fissures now offering a convincing rendering of Zobeck at the end of the world perhaps. To add to the apocalyptic scene, reeking fog rises from several sever grates.

This sprawling chamber was once a stable for Zobeck's underground cartways used both by servants to deliver supplies to and from various shops and estates without clogging the cobblestone walkways above, and for clandestine meetings between nobles engaging in affairs or illicit deals. Once these tunnels were beautiful carved marble passageways, but as the filthy flow of Zobeck's sewage grew too thick for the over taxed pipes, the waste began to encroach on the old cartways making them untenable as a means of travel.

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**Environment:** The miasmic vapors here are particularly dense (see General Features above), and also confer concealment on anyone moving through here and obscure vision beyond 10 feet.

**Creatures:** The otyughs prowling the well outside in area 5 also enjoy reaching up with their tentacles to menace people moving through this foggy station house. If any still live they stick their grasping tentacles up through the drainage holes to attack.

In addition the cultists have placed some guardians of their own in this chamber. A clutch of carrion bats lurk in the upper recesses. These zombie dire bats are under the command of Brother Carthok, a human cleric of the Red Goddess, one of the rare male devotees of her faith. The rotting bats drop noiselessly into the fog using their blindsense to track down the PCs in the miasma and attack.

**Environment:** Brother Carthok has also leveled a *desecrate* effect on this room, centered on a basin of blood with a woman's skull within, crimson hair still draped about her bone brow (a small shrine to the Red Goddess).

#### Otyughs (3): hp 36, MM page 204.

**Carrion Bats (8) CR 1** (Zombie Dire Bats) Large undead Init +5; Senses blindsense 40 ft.; Listen +0, Spot +0 DEFENSE AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 12 (+5 Dex, +3 natural, -1 size) hp 33 each (4d12+3) Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +6 OFFENSE Spd 20 ft., fly 40 ft. (clumsy) Melee bite +7 (1d4+9 and disease) Space 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft. Special putrid bite (disease) STATISTICS Str 20, Dex 20, Con -, Int 1, Wis 10, Cha 1 Base Atk +2; Grp +11 Feats Toughness Skills -SQ putrid bite, undead traits Putrid Bite (Ex) Carrion bats gain a +4

circumstance bonus to their diseased bite DC. Anyone bitten is exposed to filth fever (DC 16, 1d3 days incubation, 1d3 Str and 1d3 Con).



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CR 7

#### 7. Rotten Carriage House (EL 5)

Cobwebs drape from rotting wooden beams above in this dank chamber. On the floor, pieces of a broken chariot litter the floor, a gruesome mass of lashed-up human bones that has fallen apart.

This chamber once connected to a series of tunnels (long since sealed up) and served as a stable for carts and chariots such as the broken ruin abandoned here. Some of the nobles using these tunnels for travel catered to necromantic cults and cabals of foppish nihilists who embraced death cults. Chariots such as this one were commonplace in those days and considered "art."

**Creature:** Brother Carthok found this ruined chariot most amusing and worked his foul necromantic powers upon it. The thing is an animated terror of mis-matched bones running on two wagon wheels with two giant skull heads and wielding twin morning stars ending in boneshard spiked balls. The thing animates whenever anyone enters who does not immediately utter the phrase "ivory ride." Tolos is aware of this phrase but conveniently forgets to inform the PCs, enjoying the prospect of their dismemberment at the hands of the rotten chariot.

Rotten Chariot Monstrosity (CR 5): hp 65, DR 5/bludgeoning, immune to cold, AC 12, Melee +10/+10, damage 2d6+6, use the stats for an ettin skeleton.

#### 8. Father Dashorba's Shrine (EL 8)

Guttering torches spew black smoke into the air here. The pungent vapors spiral up towards a vent far above. The floor is slick with gore and a series of boiling cauldrons are lined up along one wall, sputtering and sending a brownish steam into the air.

All manner of vile things hang from chains on the opposite wall—a small, bloodsmeared skull, a dead cat with six legs, a necklace made of severed fingers.

This room was an underground cookhouse for the servants who worked the cartways decades ago. The corroded cauldrons have been here for years, and are now put to new and disgusting use.

#### **Father Dashorba**

CE male bugbear adept 6 Medium humanoid (goblinoid) Init +2; Senses Listen +10, Spot +10 Languages Common

#### DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 18 (+3 natural, +2 Dex, +5 +2 studded leather armor) hp 43 (3d8+3 and 6d6+6) Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +10

OFFENSE

#### Spd 30 ft.

Melee +2 sickle +10 (1d6+5)

#### Special Attacks spells

Spells Prepared (CL 6th)

2<sup>nd</sup>—*mirror image, scorching ray* (+7 ranged touch)

1<sup>st</sup>—burning hands (DC 15), command (DC 15), protection from good, 0—detect magic, ghost sound, light

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat If Dashorba hears the sounds of combat from either area 7 or 12, he prepares for the oncoming enemies by casting *protection from good* and *mirror image*. He then orders his mutilated bugbear acolytes to flank the entrance through which an enemy might approach.
- During Combat Dashorba casts scorching ray, then sends Nurg to attack the party. He then readies an action to kick over the cauldrons on an approaching PC (3d6 fire damage, DC 15 Reflex for half). Then Dashorba closes to melee and goes to work with his sickle.

Morale Dashorba fights to the death. STATISTICS

- Str 16, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 12 Base Atk +5; Grp +8
- Feats Combat Casting, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (sickle)
- Skills Concentration +6, Heal +8, Listen +10, Spot +10, Survival +6

**Combat Gear** +2 sickle, +2 studded leather armor, red robes and a pouch full of puzzle pieces made of sawed up skull pates, and a pouch of chewing bloodweed.

Bugbears (2): hp 16, see *MM* page 29 Nurg the blink dog: hp 22 (currently 18), see *MM* page 28. Due to his abuse, he trusts no one and attacks any creature approaching him.

**Creatures:** Father Dashorba is one of Brisly's most favored cultists. The old bugbear shaman threw himself into the Red Goddess' service with a bizarre fervor, creating his own strange rites to honor the goddess. His methods may seem infantile, but Brisly is always impressed by his zeal.





Father Dashorba

Dashorba is an elderly shaman, with an impressive hulking frame though his jowls sag with age and his eyes are going milky. The shaman's teeth are cracked and black, so riddled with rot and painful that he must boil his victims to brown soup before slurping it up.

Two disfigured bugbear novices, whose tongues he cut out and offered to the goddess long ago, act as his attendants. Dashorba also keeps a "pet" blink dog, a tormented thing named Nurg who was once the animal companion of a noble elven druid. After Dashorba's tribe strung his master up by the entrails, Nurg was "retrained" by the bugbear shaman to be his companion. The blink
dog has suffered horrible torments and his once lustrous coat is now mangy and shows several ropey scars under his patched fur. The poor thing does nothing but respond to Dashorba's commands now, for fear of the lash or a burning brand.

Infiltration: If the PCs are posing as cultists when they enter here have Father Dashorba make a Spot check against the lowest Disguise check. If he fails he smiles a broken-toothed grin and invites them in to drink his gory soup with him. Nurg is harder to fool and growls low if he smells someone unfamiliar as the PCs draw nearer, tipping Dashorba off.

## 9. The Bloody Bath (EL 6)

A large pool is set into the far wall of this chamber brimming over with bubbling blood. Scalding steam rises from the boiling pool making this chamber uncomfortably warm and foul-smelling.

The liquid isn't blood but rather rust-tainted water that leaks down from the foundry above during the rainy season and collects here. The same magma vents that heat the old foundry also heat this drainage ditch. Anyone making a DC 25 Knowledge (dungeoneering) or Survival check notes that the earthen floor here is dug up and churned —a sign this area is the territory of burrowing creatures.

**Creatures:** The magma also attracts the dangerous attention of a family of thoqqua who burrow about in the hot mud deep below this chamber. The thoqqua are very territorial and the cultists long ago decided to avoid this area entirely. When they detect the PCs above via their blindsense, they burrow up, burst from the earthen floor and attack: **Thoqqua (5)**: hp 16, MM page 242.

# 10. The Old Mine Shaft (EL 9)

Sacks of rotten grain are heaped about this chamber, along with crates of spoiled eggs and other items. Once a mine shaft, this chamber's rough hewn walls extend high into the darkness above where wooden timbers criss cross in the shadows. A mashed-up corpse slowly festers in the middle of the chamber, bloat flies circling it lazihy. When the cultists moved in, they decided to make this old mine shaft into a storehouse for their food and sundries. Then members of the cult started to go missing one by one. Finally Brother Carthok and the others realized the shaft's shadowy upper reaches and many crawlspaces are the hunting ground of a dangerous choker named Hakkaht. The aberration has been a thorn in the cult's side ever since, strangling any cultist who wanders off alone.

The choker is surprised to see someone in his shaft and assumes they are cultists come to harass him. Furious at the intrusion, Hakkaht slinks down the shaft to attack.

Hakkaht	CR 9
CE male choker rogue 7	
Small aberration	
Init +3; Senses Listen +1, Spot +1	196 1
Languages Common	
DEFENSE	
AC 18, touch 14, flat-footed 15;	
improved uncanny dodge	
(+3 Dex, +4 natural, +1 size)	
hp 57 (3d8+6 and 7d6+14)	
Fort +5, Ref +4, Will +4; evasion	
OFFENSE	
Spd 20 ft., climb 10 ft.	
Melee 2 tentacles +13 (1d3+6)	13
Space 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft.	74
Special Attacks constrict 1d3+6,	

improved grab, sneak attack +4d6

## TACTICS

- Before Combat Hakkaht moves by stealth; with a successful opposed Hide vs. Spot roll, he gains a surprise round.
- During Combat Hakkaht strikes with his tentacles and sneak attack against a Small flat-footed foe, then retreats. He does not fight it out against superior numbers.
- Morale Hakkaht fights to take one foe down and retreat; he climbs away if reduced to less than 28 hp.

#### STATISTICS

- Str 18, Dex 17, Con 14, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 8 Base Atk +6; Grp +10
- Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Stealthy, Weapon Focus (tentacle)
- Skills Climb +6, Escape Artist +11, Hide +18, Listen +7, Move Silently +18, Spot +7
- SQ trapfinding, trap sense +2 Combat Gear +2 amulet of mighty fists, dirty tunic, a sharpened funnel.

## 11. Guard Chamber (EL Varies)

A chipped wooden table and a few rickety chairs sit in the center of this relatively dry and clean stone chamber.

This was once the office of the head groom of the underground cartways. A secret panel here leads to the Overseer's Chamber (area 13). A DC 20 Search check reveals a small pedal trigger that makes the panel slide back.

Creatures: The cultists, after discovering the secret panel that leads to area 13, decided it was the perfect spot to post a few sentries. They cleaned the chamber up, sealed up the miasmic grates and made it somewhat habitable. Now four of Brisly's devoted cultists wallow here, fighting boredom as they stand guard. To make their lives worse, one of the upjumped aristocratic converts, a rail-thin golden-haired fop named Arturo, has taken it upon himself to "command" them. Besides referring to them as low-born rabble, Arturo constantly gives them orders (which they ignore).

As the PCs approach this chamber ask for a DC 20 Listen check. If they succeed they hear Arturo issuing inane commands to "check the perimeter, hone your wits!" or some such. If the PCs continue to listen instead of charging in, they hear the other cultists strangle the fop to death. If they hang back and wait, they face only the cultists, and poor Arturo is a purpling corpse. If they rush into the room, the cultists unite to fight the party.

If the PCs are moving through area 12 and these cultists are still here they move into the Overseer's Chamber (area 13) to attack with the *lightning rods* in that area.

## Cultists (4)

#### **CR 3**

- hp 14, see page 23.
  Before Combat If the cultists hear the PCs fighting the carrion bats in area 6 they ready themselves by drinking their potions and allow Arturo to live.
  During Combat The cultists slink against the walls and try to surprise the PCs with their strangle sashes. If this fails, they draw their blooddripper knives and go to grisly work.
- Morale The cultists fight to the death.

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#### Arturo,

# Converted Aristocrat CR 2

hp 22, see page 22. Before Combat If Arturo hears the PCs approaching or fighting in area 6 he drinks his potion and ceases his

ridiculous issuing of commands. **During Combat** Arturo allows his "minions" to do the close up dirty work, and instead he uses his *ring* of ram (magic trinket) to knock PCs away.

Morale Arturo surrenders immediately if seriously threatened. He is willing if not eager to spill his guts in exchange for the PCs not spilling them for him.

**Development:** If the PCs capture Arturo alive he whimpers and begs for mercy, claiming he was led astray by the cult. He says they brainwashed him. As despicable and ridiculous as Arturo is, he can prove particularly useful. For one, he knows about the dangers of areas 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10. He knows the safe phrase ("ivory ride") for the Rotten Carriage Monstrosity.

### 12. Slave Tracks

This long stretch of ruined corridor is knee deep in rubble in some places. Several arches and branches in this passageway have caved in or been sealed over the years. Where the floor is clear of rubble and visible, rusted metal tracks are set into the stone.

This long corridor was once used by enslaved miners to haul loads of ore up from the many shafts adjoining (all sealed or caved in now). This entire passageway is considered difficult terrain.

Secret panels in the walls here open to both Overseer's Chambers (area 13). A DC 25 Search check is needed to find these entrances, but they are not designed to open from this side. They can be forced with a DC 25 Strength check, or they can trigger with a DC 25 Disable Device or Open Lock check (PC's choice).

# 13. Overseer's Chambers

These stone chambers are filled with dust and cobwebs. Old metal racks rusted near to dust rest on the walls. The weapons that once lined these racks have corroded to piles of rust. The only items left unravaged by time are two strange rods set into the wall. The cruel taskmasters of these old mines kept watch over their slaves. Sliding plates provide an arrow-slit view into the Slave Tracks (area 12). The two rods in the wall in these chambers are *lightning rods*, used by the taskmasters in case the slaves concocted riotous notions.

**Treasure:** The *lightning rods* still function. Treat these as *wands of lightning bolt* that require no Use Magic Device check to activate. They each have three charges remaining.

## 14. Exsanguination Hall (EL 9)

This august chamber is filled with two rows of giant marble pillars. Suspended between the pillars are over a dozen pale corpses, copper tubing inserted into their wrists, thighs, chests and necks. Pails and buckets sit below them gathering blood drop by drop.

This hall was once a lounge for the rich travelers of the cartways, and a den of vice where nobles could discreetly enjoy all manner of debauchery.

Now this chamber is a charnel house devoted to the Red Goddess. The blooddrained corpses hanging here are victims captured by the cult. The majority of them are disappeared vagrants, prostitutes and runaway children – people nobody will ever miss. The cult has been dragging victims down the well for weeks, exsanguinating them and using the blood in their orgiastic rites.

**Creatures:** A band of Brisly's devoted cultists toil here at all hours. Six of them work these victims over for every last drop of blood, employing cruel pumps and copper tubing to suck the blood out of them alive. Their supervisor is the cult's Bloodmaster, a demented necromancer named Dralkard.

Dralkard has been with the cult as long as Brisly. The aged albino was deemed an outcast by his people and exiled from their forested enclave before he even reached maturity. They believed he was corrupted by evil, and if Dralkard wasn't already, their cruel treatment of him ensured the brand was a self-fulfilling prophecy. He fell in with the Cult of the Red Goddess shortly thereafter and served them for decades as lorekeeper, though he always wanted to be Bloodmaster

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instead. When Brisly became the Chosen One of the Goddess, Dralkard fell in love with the blood hag, and sycophantically fawned on her day and night. She rewarded him with the role of Bloodmaster he wanted so badly.

After 30 years, he has grown to hate the post. The thrill of watching a captive succumb to numbing shock as their blood ebbed away has long since faded, and now it is merely grim toil. He is afraid to voice his unhappiness though and instead continues about his gruesome task.

Most of the captives here are long dead, but one of the hanging victims is still alive, moaning softly as two cultists massage blood out of his arms and torso.

Infiltration: If the PCs come into this chamber dressed as cultists, make opposed Spot and Disguise and opposed Sense Motive and Bluff checks. If the PCs pull off the act, Dralkard demands to know why they were sent. If they give a reasonable response he tries to set them to work helping a pair of cultists exsanguinate Shagglo.

**Development:** These cultists are diehard zealots and cough up no information if captured alive. If forced to talk using magic, they know what Arturo knows (see area 11).

The only way to get Dralkard to talk is to threaten his bat familiar (Madam). Dralkard loves his familiar as much as he loves Madam Brisly and he tells the PCs everything he knows if they spare the bat. Besides what Arturo knows, Dralkard can tell the party about the Slave Tracks (area 12), the Summoning Circle (area 16), and the Ritual Hall (area 17). More importantly, Dralkard knows that the rubble in the Broken Atrium leads directly to Brisly's Ritual Hall, and that a quiet adventurer or three could sneak into the well-guarded ceremonial chamber via this route.

The surviving captive is at -2 hit points when the PCs enter. He loses 2 hit points per round to the exsanguination devices. Unless freed of the devices with a full round DC 15 Heal or Disable Device check, the poor man perishes. If the captive, a street peddler named Shagglo, is saved and healed above 0 hit points, he thanks the PCs for their timely intervention until he sees his wife's drained

**CR 3** 

corpse hanging next to him—at which point he breaks down and cannot be consoled.

CR 6

#### Dralkard

CE male human necromancer 6 Medium humanoid Init +3; Senses low-light vision; Listen +0, Spot +0 Languages Common

#### DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 17, flat-footed 14 (+4 mage armor, +4 shield, +3 Dex) hp 41 (6d4+12 plus 11) Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +7

#### OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee +1 wounding dagger +7 (1d4 and 1 Con)

Special Attacks spells

Spells Prepared (CL 6<sup>th</sup>)

- 3rd—displacement, empowered ray of enfeeblement (+7 ranged touch), ray of exhaustion (+7 ranged touch), vampiric touch (+7 touch)
- 2<sup>nd</sup>—false life, ghoul touch (DC 17), scorching ray (+7 ranged touch), summon swarm, whispering wind
- 1<sup>st</sup>—grease, mage armor, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement (+7 ranged touch), shield
- 0—arcane mark, daze (DC 15), detect magic, ghost sound, light, mage hand, read magic

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat If he has time to prepare, Dralkard casts false life, mage armor, shield, and displacement; he also casts ghoul touch on his bat familiar so she may attack the PCs.
- During Combat Dralkard lets his cultists engage the PCs as he hurls rays their way and summons a swarm of spiders to harry them. If forced into melee he uses vampiric touch and his wounding dagger. If seriously threatened Dralkard attempts to cast whispering wind to warn Brisly.

Morale Dralkard fights to the death. STATISTICS

- Str 8, Dex 17, Con 15, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 10 Base Atk +3; Grp +2
- Feats Empower Spell, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Weapon Focus (ray)
- Skills Diplomacy +9, Concentration +11, Heal +4, Knowledge (arcana) +13, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +12, Knowledge (religion) +6, Listen +3, Spellcraft +13

#### SQ summon familiar

**Combat Gear** +1 wounding dagger, red robes and sandals.

Madam, Dralkard's bat familiar: hp 20, see *MM* page 268.

# Cultists (6)

hp 14, see page 23.

- Before Combat If the cultists hear the PCs fighting the carrion bats in area 6 they ready themselves by drinking their potions and allow Arturo to live.
- During Combat The cultists slink against the walls and try to surprise the PCs with their strangle sashes. If this fails, they draw their blooddripper knives and go to work.
- Morale The cultists fight to the death.

# 15. Broken Atrium

The grand doors here open to a rubble-filled room. The wall and most of the ceiling here collapsed long ago, though this area may once have been an atrium adjoining another chamber beyond.

This atrium used to lead to the main intersection of the cartways before its collapse. The space beyond the rubble is now Brisly's Ritual Hall where the majority of her sycophantic disciples prostrate themselves to the Red Goddess, bathe in orgies of blood, and engage in sexual and violent frenzies.

The rubble here seems impassable, but anyone making a DC 25 Listen check can hear murmurs of the orgy taking place on the other side. Anyone inspecting the rubble and making a DC 20 Knowledge (architecture and engineering) or Search check notes that the rubble near the ceiling is loose. A small clear passage lies beyond that leads right into the Ritual Hall.

### 16. The Summoning Circle (EL 9)

This chamber reeks of brimstone and burning hair. The room is laid out in a giant six pointed star. In the center of the room stands a towering horned skeleton, fire burning its eyes and a barbed tail sprouting from its back. The smoldering devil hisses at you, caustic spittle spraying from its mouth and sizzling on the floor at its taloned feet, and it drops into a fighting stance.

Long before the cultists moved in, a devilworshipping mage named Kaltrez used this abandoned chamber as a summoning circle. Kaltrez died when a tunnel collapsed on his head and crushed his skull. **Creature:** The last devil Kaltrez bound, an osyluth named Jalthir, remains trapped in the silver circle the diabolist scribed around him. He's wallowed here for over a decade. Jalthir is desperate to be free.

By snarling at the PCs and readying himself for battle, Jalthir hopes to lure someone into crossing his circle, which instantly frees him. If so, he cackles and fights until reduced to less than 20 hp, then teleports back to the Nine Hells.

The silver circle is covered in years of grime and dust, but anyone making a DC 25 Spot check notices it before they charge in, and anyone making a DC 20 Spellcraft, Knowledge (arcana) or Knowledge (the planes) check realizes the devil is bound within and harmless unless he is attacked or someone crosses his silver seal.

Luckily for the cultists Dralkard was the first to enter this chamber and warned the others about the circle. They attempted to bargain with the devil for his freedom, but Brisly refused to trust the duplicitous creature and let him languish in his prison. The cultists avoid this room entirely.

If a PC notices the silver seal and they do not free Jalthir by attacking him or breaking the circle, he resorts to dealing. The devil is as double-talking as they come. He tries to make a deal with the PCs that allows him his freedom and requires nothing of him, or even a way to eat their souls if able.

If the PCs hold a firm line (with a DC 25 Diplomacy check), they may convince the osyluth to help them deal with the cult. A rampaging devil in the Ritual Hall would provide a great distraction and could wreak a lot of devastation. Jalthir would be happy to pay back the cultists for leaving him trapped. Even in his weak position, Jalthir attempts to haggle a decent price for his services; if not the soul of a PC's loved one, then at least the soul of an animal. The cultist's souls he already reckons as his.

Jalthir: hp 95, see MM page 52.

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# 17. The Ritual Hall (EL Varies)

Dozens of naked men and woman bathe in huge pools of blood in this gigantic pleasure ground of savage delights. Robed figures huddle in circles: some are offering feverish vespers to a towering headless red idol of a bloated female form, a fountain of blood spraying from her rent neck. A river of blood flows through this chamber and on the far side a raised dais, 15 feet high, is piled with plush pillows and a throne.

Atop the throne sits a haggard bloody crone, hunchbacked and with a mop of thick wriggling worms for hair. At her side is a tall human man with dark skin and a black goatee. A clutch of brutish bugbears stand to either side.

This is the heart of the cult, where strange orgies of blood carry on every night, along with wild incantations, glossalalia, and obeisance to the Red Goddess. A number of cultists and slaves cavort in the blood baths.

Creatures: Most of the cultists here are sycophants and cowards. The majority are new converts—a mixture of doughy rich aristocrats plummeting into mid life crises and young sons and daughters of the upper crust sowing their oats in gory and perverse fashion. When combat erupts 20 of the 38 cultists shriek, hide, and flee.

About 15 cultists are more combat ready: Five are converted aristocrats who aren't spineless whelps, and 10 are devoted cultists who followed Brisly from the early days. Three of the devoted cultists are posted at each of the two entrances to this large chamber (entering from areas12 and 16). The rubble pile connecting this area to the Atrium is unguarded.

Madam Brisly is here as well on a raised dais on the far side of the chamber, a river of blood separating her from the gyrating throng. Atop the dais with her are several of her zealous bugbear disciples and Brother Carthok, taking in the spectacle of the orgy. If any kind of violence erupts, Carthok moves to cover his mistress' retreat. The blood hag flees to area 21 and waits there hoping to learn the PCs have been destroyed, but ready to make her last stand if need be.



# Brother Carthok Waits

## **Brother Carthok**

**CR 8** 

NE male human cleric 8 Medium humanoid

Init +1; Senses Listen +4, Spot +4 Languages Common

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 11, flat-footed 23 (+10 mithril platemail, +3 shield, +1 Dex) hp 53 (8d8+16) Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +8

OFFENSE

Spd 15 ft.

Melee +2 adamantine wounding morningstar +12/+6 (1d8+5 and 1 Con) Special Attacks rebuke undead, spells Spells Prepared (CL 8th, Domains: Death, Trickery)

4th-confusion (DC 18), death ward, divine power, spell immunity 3rd-blindness/deafness (DC 17), contagion (DC 17), dispel magic, magic circle against good, nondetection, 2<sup>nd</sup>—bear's endurance, bull's strength, death knell, hold person (DC 16), invisibility

1<sup>st</sup>—bless, command X2 (DC 15), disguise self, deathwatch, entropic shield, shield of faith

0-cure minor wounds, detect magic, guidance, read magic, virtue

### TACTICS

Before Combat If alerted to the presence of intruders, Carthok slays a simpering slave by his side and casts death knell as they bleed out. He then casts

invisibility to hide himself from foes and then calls on the Red Goddess to grace him with bear's endurance, bull's strength, entropic shield, and shield of faith. He saves divine power until just before melee combat.

During Combat Brother Carthok hurls the might of the Goddess down on his foes from a distance with confusion, blindness, contagion, hold person and command (his favorites are "kneel' and "flee" especially when the foe is surrounded by cultists). In melee, he casts divine favor and then draws his +2 adamantine wounding morningstar and goes to bloody work, sundering an opponent's weapon if he has the opportunity.

Morale Brother Carthok fights to the death. STATISTICS

Str 17, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 14 Base Atk +6; Grp +9

Feats Improved Sunder, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (morningstar) Skills Bluff +8, Concentration +7,

Diplomacy +8, Knowledge (arcana) +6, Knowledge (religion) +8, Disguise +7 (+9 acting in character), Hide +11, Spellcraft +9

#### SQ rebuke undead

Combat Gear +2 adamantine wounding morningstar, +2 mithril platemail, +1 heavy steel shield, red robes and sandals

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Infiltration: If the PCs arrive dressed as cultists they are only given a cursory glance by the sentries unless they have reason to suspect an attack. Also anyone sneaking in through the rubble passage is most likely ignored until they act.

If the cultists are tipped off that the PCs are coming (perhaps by Dralkard's *whispering wind* spell or a fleeing cultist from an early encounter) they pretend to let the PCs by and then whip out their strangle sashes and choke the life from them.

#### Cultists (10)

hp 14, see page 23.

Before Combat If the cultists have time to prepare because they knew the PCs were coming they quaff their potions.

**CR 3** 

During Combat The cultists dispense with their sashes unless they have the drop on the PCs, flanking and using their blooddrippers instead.

Morale The cultists fight to the death.

# Converted Aristocrats (5) CR 2

hp 22, see page 22. Before Combat The aristocrats prepare

by drinking potions. **During Combat** The aristocrats hurl magical trinket attacks if they have any, otherwise they close in with their rapiers.

Morale They fight to the death.

Bugbears (2): hp 16, MM page 29 Madam Brisly: hp 102, see Appendix A.

# 18. The Blood-Drenched Corridor (CR 8)

Darkness yawns in the long corridor ahead. The sound of dripping water echoes from within. A glance at the wall betrays the source of the sound—not water but blood, oozing through numerous grates mortared into the wall.

The crushed remains of human victims seem to have been squeezed between unforgiving steel grates and the punishing stone walls. Puddles of gore fill the tunnel, draining from the poor ruined victims within the niches.

This gruesome corridor was once part of an underground quarry; the steel grates are on clockwork hinges that swing open. Slabs of stone were then placed within and the grates crushed them into smaller blocks. Once the cultists moved in they put these powerful machines to grim work. They found that when a human was placed within the alcoves and the grate presses closed on them, it pulped them. Brisly found this most amusing, not to mention a fast and simple way to extract most of a victim's blood. The cultists often place large bowls or cauldrons below the alcoves and collect the blood of a crushed victim.

Grate Trap: Most of these grates are closed now, but four of them are open in the middle of the corridor, and rigged to activate when a lever is pulled at the far end of the tunnel. There Brisly waits for the PCs and when one or more move into the squares; she activates them. The grates swing down from above, scooping anyone in their path into an alcove and then crushing messily.

A DC 25 Search check reveals the threat of the grates above before someone steps in their path. Likewise, a DC 20 Reflex save allows a target to leap or scamper out of the way of the swinging grates.

Anyone caught is pushed into the alcove and suffers 4d6 damage per round as they are pulped by the steel grate. Every round they may attempt a DC 20 Strength check to push the grate open or a DC 20 Escape Artist check to get out. Doing so grinds its gears and renders the deadly trap inert until repaired.

#### **Crushing Grates Trap**

CR 8; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; Reflex DC 20 save; Damage 4d6 per round, continuous (DC 20 Strength ends); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 25.

**Development:** As soon as Brisly activates the grates she flees to area 21.

## 19. The Hall of Faces (EL 7)

The walls of this large masonry chamber are covered in small tapestries or hanging shrouds. Closer inspection reveals these draperies to be human faces, torn from the skull to hang here like trophies of some hideous crime. There are too many here to hang, and a large pile of them sits in the corner of the room.

Blood hags claim the faces of their victims. When feeding they remove the face from the skull and let their blood drinking hair drape on the gory skull of their prey. The hair burrows into their neck, into the major arteries and drinks deep.

After feeding, blood hags replace the faces on the skulls, leaving hairline scars behind. When they've finished with a victim and decided to drain them dry, the hag often claims the face of her "lover." Most enjoy keeping the faces of their favorite victims as mementoes.

Madam Brisly has been feeding on hapless men and women for decades, carefully



**Gibbering** Walady

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preserving her collection of faces over the years and keeping it with her in her travels. Her collection has expanded considerably since arriving in Zobeck.

**Creature:** The pile of faces in the corner is the horrid spawn of the blood hag's predations, a creature called a gibbering malady. The thing waits until the PCs enter the room and then springs to life, its many stitched-together faces moaning, blathering and contorting freakishly. The faces hanging on the wall also spring to life jerking about, their mouths working as they struggle to free themselves from the nails pinning them to the walls.

Gibbering Malady: hp 93. See Appendix A.

#### 20. Carthok's Rectory

This small simple chamber is furnished only with a prayer mat and a strange bed of needles and copper tubing. The area around the bed is stained with dried crusted blood.

Carthok kept his quarters here. The prayer mat is where he knelt and spoke his daily prayers, but he only truly spoke to the Goddess on his bed of needles and exsanguination tubes. There he bled to his Goddess nightly, paying her obeisance in his own blood.

### 21. Brisly's Den (EL 9)

This chamber reeks of sweat, blood and refuse. The floor is caked in old blood and flies fill the air buzzing to and fro. A rack on the wall holds a dead limp naked man, his face long gone, a blood smeared skull grinning madly out at the world. A bed of furs and human skin blankets in the corner, and a table filled with scalpels, pincers, tubes and a bonesaw rests against one wall. At the other is an old mahogany desk with several quills and tanned skin parchment laid out upon it.

**Creature:** This is Brisly's lair. She makes her final stand here against the PCs. She awaits them on the ceiling, curled into the corner by the entryway like an old spider, where she can watch them enter before she springs down to attack.

Madam Brisly, blood hag: hp 102, See Appendix A for details.



Wadam Brisly

**Treasure:** Brisly's favorite tokens are the faces in area 19, but she has a certain craving for red jewelry as well. Behind her bed, tangled in furs, is a sack of gemstones, ruby rings, bloodstone necklaces, and red gold nuggets (donated by the converted aristocrats) worth a total of 1,200 gp.

**Development:** After she is reduced to less than 20 hp, Brisly howls.

"That meddling thief of an alchemist and his disgusting friends. He'll pay for taking the Mother from me... in the end madness will take him and his precious city!"

If taken alive, Brisly relates her entire history with Armand, even revealing that he is in possession of the Mother of Gorgons. She fumes, her wormy hair spitting blood, as she snarls out curses at the alchemist.

Even if Bristly is slain, the PCs trail does not go cold here. Her head falls off and speaks a curse.

"The Goddess break you and crush you! May your eyes fail you and your blood freeze in the vein, and your wounds never heal. The curse of the Red Goddess upon you, a thousand times over!"

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The human skin parchments on Brisly's desk detail her recent troubles. She has been painstakingly jotting down her problems with Armand to report to another cult cell in a faraway city whose leader is named only as "Ravener." At her wits end, she was planning on asking Ravener for assistance in dealing with the frustrating alchemist who has somehow foiled all her attempts to apprehend and control him. Brisly is loath to share her prized Mother of Gorgons with another cell of the Red Goddess' cult, but she is exasperated with Armand and in dire need of aid in subduing the beastly man.

Brisly's Curse: The curse has no magical effect. However, you do not have to inform your players of that. For example, if they try to use magic to divine its effects, muttering almost under your breath about powerful curses hiding from magic will make them nervous.



# The House that UBlood UBuilt

The party's true nemesis is revealed, but the dire plans for the potent Blood of the Gorgon remain shrouded in mystery.

ith the cult dealt with, a grave threat to the citizens of Zobeck is expunged. However, the PCs soon learn from Madam Brisly's blooddrooling lips, or from her scrawled testament to Armand's duplicity, that they have been used by the alchemist in a brilliant gambit to cull his enemies and ensure his possession of the Mother of Gorgons goes uncontested.

The only route to resolving this enigma ends at Armand's door. The deranged alchemist's apartments in Zobeck's upper quarter are expansive and filled with the twisted history of Armand's life. Nightmares, apparitions, dread cultists now infused with the *blood elixir* and demented victims of the alchemist's "experiments" roam his home, just waiting for a band of foolhardy adventures to encroach.

Table 6 lists the cultists in the rooms above ground who might hear something and respond to combat in another room. Due to the thick walls, doors, lavish paneling and hangings, Listen checks in Armand's house are at +10 to the DC for anything in another room, in addition to the standard +1 for every 10 feet of distance. The monsters rarely respond to any disturbance outside their room.

# Armand's Apartments

pper Zobeck is a quiet district with well-kept cobblestone lanes, impressive gothic structures of marble and good stone zigzagged with ivy. A few pleasant garden-parks are interspersed between its many townhouses, breath-taking temples, and lavish courtyard apartments. Armand's apartments do not stand out as a den of villainy and terror, but resemble the other dwellings cloistered nearby. At a glance, his home is typical of a cultured member of the Clockwork City's upper echelon. Some evils resonate for miles around, and other,

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more insidious threats can coil right beneath the surface of our neighborhood, their savage hearts varnished in a thin coat of civilization.

Armand's particular block is a quiet one. The neighboring apartments on either side of the alchemist's dwelling belong to no one aristocrat or council member, but rather house some of the city's elderly elite. Doddering old magisters, now senile senior clerks, former generals, and old clergymen convalesce in these well appointed sinecure homes, as a reward for their service. Volunteers tend to them, and their kindly neighbor Silas often visits as well. Since Armand has taken over though, seven of these elders have gone mysteriously missing from their beds in the night, instead populating the cells below the madman's apartments, and gracing the cold steel tables of his secret laboratory.

# Table 6: Cultists & NPCs

Respond to Room Name comment **Bloody Braxal** 23, 24, 25 human ranger 6 **Bloody Daggins** hound animal companion 23, 24, 25 22 Grand Entryway **Bloody** Cultists 4 23, 24, 25 23 Gallery will o'wisps 2 n/a 24 Trophy Room gnome illusionist 6 Shiggles Gurtukle 22, 25 25 Dining Hall invisible stalkers 2 n/a cultists 1 per room 23, 28, 31 26 Svt's Quarters hobgoblin in last room 23, 28, 31 Daargrang monks 6 28 Gaming Room Ditan & Jarmo 25 29 Music Room large fire elemental n/a 31 Kitchens Curdles dust mephit n/a 33 Beatrix' Room Beatrix ghostly mother n/a homunculus teddy bear 34 Bertram's Room Saggins n/a 35 Master Bedroom Bloody Ulina half-orc barbarian 33

As the PCs approach, a light wind blows, sending pamphlets and scraps dancing through the cobblestone lanes. A few orange lanterns light the landing where two heavy oaken doors bar entrance to Armand's apartments. The lane is devoid of life and quiet as any graveyard.

General Features: Armand's apartments are made of solid dark wood and masonry. The former magistrate (his adopted father) inherited the entire courtyard block from an uncle, whose family had erected the place in Zobeck's turbulent fledgling days. To withstand the unrest and potential assault common to that time, the courtyard block was well mortared and built to withstand the ravages of time. The apartment walls are thick stone with a wood façade, and breaking through them is no mean feat (DC 30 Strength check, Hardness 20, hp 200).

Additionally, the doors are heavy oak and if they are locked and barred require a DC 20 Strength check to force. The doors have a hardness of 10 and 100 hit points. While - The House that Blood Built -



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the doors are sturdy enough, the locks are antiquated and were designed to hold off the rabble of a mob, not trained adventurers. Any locked door in the apartments can be picked with a DC 15 Open Lock check unless otherwise stated.

Fire is a concern inside the apartments and any fire based area-effect spell has a 10% chance of setting a room on fire. Unless the flames are quelled quickly, the entire courtyard block could go up in smoke, and dozens of patients in the nearby sinecure homes could be reduced to ash.

# 22. The Grand Entryway (EL 10)

Within lies a grandiose ball appointed with two rows of bluish marble pillars and two great staircases ascending to a landing above. A thick white carpet runs like a strip of snow between the pillars.

This great hall is designed for shock and awe. Visitors always comment on the blue-white marble pillars and white carpet. The landing is 20 feet above the floor below. The stairs on the west side of this great hall are sturdy, though termites have gnawed the ones on the east and they are decrepit. A few of the stairs gave way a few weeks back, and Armand decided to cover up the whole with a sturdylooking but parchment-thin bit of finishing so that foes might rush up the stairs and fall through.

Creatures: Armand has been ready for trouble since his break with the Cult of the Red Goddess. The cultists he turned to his side protect the only access point to his apartments. A particularly vile old murderer named Braxal awaits the PCs along with a slew of other cutthroats.

Braxal was an adventurer in his misspent youth, priding himself on his ability to track down and slay fearsome predators. The young ranger was rakishly handsome, and his good looks and his daring profession were enough to put dozens of village lasses on their backs for him. Braxal was arrogant and cocksure, believing his skill with a pair of clockwork crossbows could quell any horror, and his winning smile could melt any heart.

When he faced Madam Brisly, he found out how wrong he was. She tied the ranger to a rack and fed on him for weeks, breaking his spirit and shredding his sanity. When she was done with him, she only returned half his face, and then forced him to serve at her demented whim; constantly promising to give the other half back only when he "earned it." He never did of course, but after committing a string of cruel murderers, the ranger-turned-slavish-freak developed a taste for killing and relished the look of terror in a woman's eyes when she shricked at his tattered face.

Madam Brisly thought Braxal was thoroughly hers, but she miscalculated his overblown ego. When the killer was assigned to watch Armand, he was the first to join the alchemist's side. In return, Armand gave Braxal a wondrous gift – a taste of the *blood elixir*. The corrupting solution grew in his dark heart, and he is reborn, a murderer's murderer. Braxal delights most in bringing pain and death to a pack of upjumped adventurers who remind him of the wonderful life he led before his face was ripped from him.

Braxal's animal companion is a mangy old hound dog named Daggins. The connection between Braxal and his old friend means the poor mutt was affected by the *blood elixir* as well. Daggins is a rabid thing bent on tearing anything or anyone apart.

Braxal leads four other cultists, all also transformed by the *blood elixir*. The other cultists hide from intruders, two behind the last two pillars (farthest from the door) and two beneath the staircases.



#### **Bloody Braxal**

CE male bloody human ranger 6 Medium humanoid Init +5; Senses Listen +11, Spot +11 Languages Common DEFENSE

**CR 8** 

# AC 26, touch 15, flat-footed 21

(+6 natural armor, +5 armor, +5 Dex) hp 45 (6d6+24) Fort +6, Ref +11, Will +3

## OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

- Melee mwk shortsword +10/+5 (1d6+6) and
- mwk shortsword +10/+5 (1d6+3) and blood drinking tongue +10 (1d6+5) Ranged mwk clockwork light
- crossbows +11/+11/+6/+6 (1d8 and syringe effects)
- Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft. (10 ft. with tongue)
- Special Attacks favored enemy (animals +4, humans +2), spells Spells Prepared (CL 4<sup>th</sup>)
- 1<sup>st</sup> –longstrider, magic fang

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat Bloody Braxal stands atop the east staircase hoping to lure a foolish PC up the broken stairs. He casts *longstrider* on himself and *magic fang* on Daggins if he has time.
- During Combat Braxal fires at the PCs with his clockwork crossbows, favoring confusion and hold person syringe bolts at the outset, and then employs his acid arrow bolts. If forced into melee, he resorts to his shortswords and tongue.
- Morale Braxal fights to the bloody end. STATISTICS
- Str 22, Dex 20, Con 21, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 14 Base Atk +6; Grp +12
- Feats Dodge, Endurance, Improved Two Weapon Fighting, Multiattack, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Two Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (light crossbow)
- Skills Climb +14, Hide +13, Jump +13, Listen +11, Move Silently +13, Spot +11, Survival +11, Use Rope +10
- SQ wild empathy, blood sense, blood drain
- Gear +2 studded leather armor, two masterwork clockwork crossbows, two masterwork shortswords, 2 hold person syringe bolts, 4 confusion syringe bolts, 2 blindness syringe bolts, 4 acid arrow syringe bolts.

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# - The House that Blood Built -

CR 5

#### **Bloody Daggins**

Medium bloody animal Init +4; Senses low-light vision, scent; Listen +5, Spot +5

#### DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 14, flat-footed 20 (+4 Dex, +10 natural) hp 34 (3d8+18) Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +1; evasion OFFENSE

#### Spd 40 ft.

Melee bite +7 (1d6+7) and blood drinking tongue +5 (1d6+7 and blood drain) Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Special blood drain, blood sense, evasion, share spells

#### STATISTICS

Str 23, Dex 19, Con 23, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 6 Base Atk +1; Grp +7 Feats Alertness, Multiattack, Track Skills Jump +12, Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim +7, Survival +1

## 23. Gallery (EL 7)

Globes of light hover near the ceiling of this huge open room, shedding muted light on a vivid collection of oil paintings and sculptures of marble and black jet. The paintings show natural wonders such a volcano casting lava into a smoke-filled sky, a red sun shining down on a ship stuck in a glacial ice flon, and a wild tempest whirling with tendrils of purple-white lightning.

On the opposing wall a series of paintings with no discernible subject matter hang in simple black frames. These paintings appear to be little more than swashes of intermingled colors, swirled together as if the artists merely threw buckets of different hues at the canvas and took a mop to it.

The sculptures are also majestic, or at least they make an impression. A minotaur king sits a throne of skulls in one corner while in the center of the room a winged satyr plays a set of panpipes carved in the likeness of five birds tied together.

Braziers burn in the corners of the room releasing a sweet-smelling incense into the air.

Armand's gallery is a cavalcade of color and spectacle in which even the magical lighting above is a work of art in and of itself. Armand—always obsessed with hidden tricks

### **Bloody Cultists (4)**

CE male bloody human rogue 2/fighter 1 Medium humanoid Init +3; Senses Listen +1, Spot +6 Languages Common

#### DEFENSE

**CR 3** 

AC 22, touch 13, flat-footed 19 (+6 natural, +3 mwk studded leather, +3 Dex) hp 26 (2d6+8 and 1d10+4)

Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +1; evasion OFFENSE

# Spd 30 ft.

Melee mwk strangle sash +10 (1d4+6) talons +8 (1d6+5) and blood drinking tongue +8 (1d6+5)

Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft. (10 ft. with tongue)

Special Attacks sneak attack +1d6 TACTICS

Before Combat The cultists hide behind the pillars and under the stairs. They spring out to strangle their prey if they go undetected. If they are spotted, they flex their taloned hands, open their bloody mouths and move to melee, to drink deep of their opponent's blood.

During Combat The cultists gang up on one or two foes.

Morale These crazed cultists fight to the death.

#### **S**TATISTICS

Str 23, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 10 Base Atk +2; Grp +4

Feats Die Hard, Endurance, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (strangle sash), Weapon Focus (strangle sash)

Skills Balance +10, Climb +9, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +8 (+10 bindings), Hide +8, Jump +13, Move Silently +8, Spot +6, Tumble +10, Use Rope +8

SQ trapfinding, trap sense +1, blood sense, blood drain

Combat Gear masterwork strangle sash, masterwork studded leather.

and duplicity—has purposefully designed most of the *objets d'art* in the room with some sinister purpose in mind.

Environment: The braziers burning in this chamber spew a special alchemical mixture into the air. This strange compound (called mandrake essence) is a mind-altering substance that causes mild euphoria, mild hallucinations and alters perceptions. Anyone exposed to the incense must succeed on a DC 20 Fortitude save or be affected by the mandrake. Make these saves for the PCs and do not inform them of the result. Mandrake



essence is an insidious compound and people under the influence are rarely aware they are even intoxicated. Once affected a creature suffers -2 to all attacks, saves and skill checks for one hour, though they do not know it (simply subtract 2 from the PCs rolls yourself).

The paintings of wild natural landscapes are rendered in a special alchemical paint of ingenious and deadly design. Each is painted in *catalyst oil* (see sidebar).

## New Alchemical Item: Catalyst Oil

This special elemental compound draws on nearby energy sources. *Catalyst oils* are tailored to one specific energy type (acid, cold, electricity, or fire). Whenever a spell or effect of this type goes off within 60 feet of a dose of *catalyst oil*, the *oil* catalyzes and hurls a bolt of the same energy directly at the source of the effect (i.e. the caster of a spell).

This bolt strikes unerringly and inflicts half the amount of energy created by the catalyzing effect to the source. For example if a sorcerer casts *fireball* near the fire-based *catalyst oil*, the oil hurls a bolt of fire inflicting half the damage of the *fireball* back on the caster. A successful Reflex save versus the spell or effects DC, if it has one, halves this damage again.

CL 11<sup>th</sup>, Brew Potion; spell turning, 4,000 gp/dose.

The painting of the volcano is painted in fire-based *catalyst oil*-laced paint, the glacial flow landscape in cold-based *catalyst oil*-laced paint, the tempest in electricity-based *catalyst oil*-laced paint. Any PC casting a cold, electricity or fire-based spell (or otherwise generating any of these energy types) activates these dangerous paintings.

The abstract paintings on the opposing wall are not harmful to the PCs directly. At first glance they feature only meaningless swaths of color. However, these paintings are designed to take a profound emotional toll on anyone under the influence of mindaltering magic or narcotics.

Anyone suffering from *confusion*, or any mind-altering alchemical compound (such as the *blood elixir* or mandrake essense) suffers terrifying hallucinations when they look deeply at these paintings, suffering the

effect of a *phantasmal killer* spell. If they fail the saving throw they die of a heart attack, if they succeed they claw at their eyes in horror, suffering the usual damage.

Once a viewer is affected by the paintings they cannot be so affected again (no *phantasmal killer* effect) but they do find them disturbing. Armand delights in bringing the subject of his experiments into this room and injecting them with heavy doses of mandrake essence, pinning their eyelids open and restraining them in a chair facing the abstract paintings. Those who do not die outright scream, gibber and wail for hours on end, and never regain their sanity.

Creature: Hiding among the strange illusory glowing orbs lighting this chamber is a pair of will o'wisps, drawn to Armand's gallery by the particularly interesting and savory outpouring of wild emotion generated by his tormented victims. The will o' wisps adore Armand, seeing him as the master chef at a great banquet of exquisite and exotic emotional fare.

In exchange for regular feedings, the will o' wisps guard the alchemist's gallery. When the PCs enter, the aberrations observe them carefully first, wait for one or more to succumb to the mandrake essence (enjoying the emotional explosion that results), and then descend to shock them. The will o' wisps' immunity to magic also protects them from the *catalyst oil*, though when the oil attacks them, a canny PC may realize the danger the paintings pose.

Will o Wisps (2): hp 40 each, see MM page 255.

## 24. Trophy Room (EL 5)

This well-appointed chamber is filled with hunter's trophies—a wolf, one fang bared in mock snarl, a towering bear standing on two legs like a great king, a noble eagle with her wings outstretched, beak held high and a grand stag, ten point antlers arrayed like a crown resting on his brow. An oval rug of crimson fur rests in the room's center.

Silas couldn't stomach the murder of an innocent animal, avoiding meat with his meals, but his adopted father enjoyed a good hunt. This chamber's trophies were garnered during Justicar Verdane's younger days, each preserved by Zobeck's master taxidermist. Silas never removed these trophies, either out of respect for his father, or because the many alchemical compounds used to preserve these carcasses had always fascinated him. The smell reminds him of his first brushes with the alchemical arts as a boy.

Creature: One of the cultists left behind by Brisly to keep Armand in line was Shiggles Gurtukle, a gnome illusionist and, a former entertainer. Shiggles, part clown, part magician, seemed to all eyes in Harkasa to be nothing more than a devoted performer who loved wide-eyed children and the slack-jawed wonder of an amazed crowd. In truth the only thing Shiggles liked about children was their parent's money and the stupid look on a boy's face when the gnome punched him in the teeth (always when the parents weren't looking, so he could pawn it off as a clumsy accident).

Shiggles found Brisly's cult in Harkasa when she offered him the chance to watch a few children bled to death over her altar. He served the Red Goddess well, gathering young street orphans to him with performances and leading them straight to Brisly's waiting talons.

The gnome loves Brisly and had no intention of betraying the hag. That changed when Armand caved in another cultist's skull with his cane when the man stood up to him and then pulled the dead man's brains out with a claw-like metal extractor. Shiggles fell right in line.

The illusionist loves the trophy room. Dead things always make him happy. He spends most of his time in here smoking pipeweed and toying with the idea of trying to kill Armand, but he can never keep the nerve when he sees Armand. Besides, the other four cultists quartered here with him would probably strangle him to death if he went against the alchemist. The four murderers with Shiggles are all fiercely loyal to Armand, even more so after he changed. them with his blood elixir. Shiggles did not drink the alchemical formula, though he's afraid it is only a matter of time before Armand has the others hold him down and forces it down his throat.



## Shiggles Gurtukle

CE male gnome illusionist 6 Small humanoid Init +1; Senses low-light vision; Listen +7, Spot +0 Languages Common DEFENSE AC 19, touch 15, flat-footed 15 (+4 mage armor, +3 shield, +1 Dex, +1 size) hp 36 (6d4+18) Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +7; +2 vs. illusions OFFENSE Spd 20 ft. Melee club +4 (1d6) Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft. Special Attacks spells Spells Prepared (CL 6th) 3<sup>rd</sup>—displacement, invisibility sphere, major image (DC 20) -cat's grace, hypnotic pattern (DC 19), mirror image, scorching ray

- (+5 ranged touch) 1<sup>st</sup>—mage armor, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement (+4 ranged touch), shield, ventriloquism (DC 18)
- 0—arcane mark, daze (DC 14), detect magic, ghost sound (DC 17), light, mage hand, prestidigitation
- Spell-like Abilities 1/day—dancing lights, ghost sound, prestidigitation, speak with animals
- (burrowing mammals only)

# TACTICS

- Before Combat If Shiggles hears combat in an adjacent area, he casts *invisibility sphere* on himself and the other cultists.
- During Combat Shiggles casts major limage to make the bear seem to attack the hardiest (and stupidest) looking PC. On the second round he makes the illusory bear burst into flames because he enjoys creating illusory thermal effects.
- Morale If the other cultists are overwhelmed, Shiggles surrenders and happily serves the PCs if they promise not kill him.

## **STATISTICS**

Str 11, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 15 Base Atk +3; Grp +3

- Feats Greater Spell Focus (illusion), Scribe Scroll, Skill Focus (Perform),
- Spell Focus (illusion) Skills Diplomacy +11,
  - Concentration +12, Craft
  - (alchemy) +8, Knowledge
  - (arcana) +13, Listen +9, Perform
  - (comedy) +9, Spelldraft +13

SQ summon familiar

Prohibited School abjuration Combat Gear club, red robes and sandals

CR 6

# - The House that Blood Built -

# Bloody Cultists (4) CR 5 hp 26

#### TACTICS

Before Combat The cultists hide in Shiggles' *invisibility sphere*.
During Combat The cultists gang up on foes if able.
Morale These crazed *blood elixir*-

tainted cultists fight to the death.

# 25. The Dining Hall (EL 9)

This massive chamber's only furniture are two long dining tables in the center of the room. Three enormous crystal chandeliers hang from the ceiling above, the light of dozens of soft-glowing candles reflecting off 100 beautiful crystals. The tables here are set with full dinnerware.

This massive chamber is where Silas hosted his few important guests. The room has a cold aura about it, as if it never really saw any use and most meals taken here were joyless affairs standing more on courtesy than warm companionship.

Creatures: A pair of Armand's more dangerous servitors, a duo of invisible stalkers adds to the chill feeling of this room. The elementals are bound to serve Silas for a decade (a gift from a wizard friend who constantly worried about the strange man's safety, living alone in his apartments). They cannot tell Armand from Silas and obey his orders as well.

On Silas' watch, these two did nothing more than help him carry equipment and perform menial tasks. Now Armand enjoys unleashing these dangerous killers on any one he pleases. When they are not out about town crushing the life from innocent bystanders, Armand tasks them with patrolling the dining hall in case of an unwanted intrusion. The stalkers hover near the ceiling and when they detect a threat (such as the PCs) they first drop a chandelier on anyone who wanders within 10 feet of the tables (4d6 damage, DC 15 Reflex save for half), and then glide down to attack.

**Treasure:** The silver and gold table settings, salt cellar, and fine porcelain here are worth 9,000 gp total, but weigh 80 pounds and are all marked with the Justicar's family crest or mark. They cannot be pawned for more than 400 gp in Zobeck.

Invisible Stalkers (2): hp 52 each, MM page 160.

# 26. Servant's Quarters (EL 7)

These were the servants' quarters when Armand was young and his mother and father kept these apartments. Scribes and attendants helped Justicar Verdane in his work, copying documents and acting as couriers in his never-ending toil. Cooks, maids and a groom kept their quarters in this wing as well.

Creatures: Some of Armand's drooling cultists inhabit these rooms. One cultist lives in each room; the decorations include a dead dog hung on a peg here, a human skin lamp shade there—just little things to make the rooms their own. If these cultists hear the sounds of battle in areas 23, 25, 28, or 31, they rush to join the fray (arriving in 1d4 rounds). They sneak up on the battleground, and try to employ their strangle sashes. None of these cultists have imbibed the blood elixir yet (Armand is saving them for other alchemical experiments). The cultist in the room next to the privy is a hulking hobgoblin named Daargrang, who joined the cult long before they came to Zobeck.

Daargrang was a runt of a hobgoblin who took a savage beating from his father every night. When Brisly came to his people's camps, she heard his father beating him, and for some reason, she took pity on the young hobgoblin. Brisly ripped out his father's heart before his eyes and offered it to him, suggesting he "eat it and gain his power." Daargrang's been killing for the blood hag ever since.

When Armand turned the other cultists against her, the hobgoblin realized he had no hopes of overpowering Armand so he bides his time. Still loyal to Brisly, he plans to kill Armand when he gets the chance. Daargrang keeps his mouth shut and his eyes open, but he has yet to seize an opportunity to plant a knife in the alchemist's back. He is afraid Armand suspects his feigned loyalty is less than genuine, and he is more than a little afraid.

If he detects a ruckus in the apartments, he shows up like the others, but switches sides immediately if he feels the PCs can help him kill Armand. He swears to help them defeat Armand unless he learns they killed Brisly. At that point, he smiles and nods claiming "she was an evil stain on the world" while he secretly plans a slow and painful death for each PC. He wants Armand dead and is happy to have the party's help for now.

Unfortunately for Daargrang, Armand caught on to the hobgoblin's true intentions recently and he's been smearing a contact poison of his own design on Daargrang's doorknob for the past few nights. The poison is called Caress of Salhara, a deadly mix that enters the system silently. The poisoned victim feels no effects until the toxin is triggered by an inhaled compound called Kiss of Salhara, at which point the victim's entrails rapidly liquefy and expel themselves in the manner of excrement—a terrible way to die. Daargrang's insides are soaked with Caress of Salhara and the moment he inhales the Kiss (see area 34), he perishes horribly.

**Note:** Record which PC opens this room's door, as it is smeared with contact poison that is trigged in area 35.

Daargrang knows a great deal about Armand and the cultists loyal to the alchemist. He can tell the party everything about Ulina in area 13 and can warn them about the cultists in area 3—including the fact that Shiggles is a reluctant accomplice in Armand's rebellion against Brisly. He avoids the second floor and does not know about the ghost of Beatrix (though he sometimes hears mournful wails through the ceiling of his room). He hasn't been in the laboratory in some time, but he knows several victims have been sequestered there and Armand does awful things to them at night.



#### Daargrang

CE male hobgoblin monk 2/rogue 3/ assassin 2

**CR 8** 

- Medium goblinoid (hobgoblin) Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +8, Spot +8
- Languages Common, Goblin

#### DEFENSE

- AC 23, touch 19, flat-footed 16; uncanny dodge
- (+2 deflection, +4 *bracers of armor*, +4 Dex, +3 Wis) hp 48 (2d8+6 and 5d6+15)
- Fort +7, Ref +13, Will +3; evasion

#### OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

- Melee unarmed +12/+12/+7 (1d6+6) Ranged mwk shurikens +11/+6 (1d2+3) Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.
- Special Attacks death attack (DC 13), sneak attack +3d6, spells
- Spells Known (CL 4<sup>th</sup>) 1st (2/day)—disguise self, true strike

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat Daargrang hides and prepares a death attack, casting true strike before he attacks.
- During Combat Daargrang employs hit and run tactics or flanks with another enemy of his target. He employs a stunning fist on the first attack and then punishes the reeling target with sneak attacks while they are dizzied.
- **Morale** Daargrang fights to the death to avenge Brisly, but otherwise he flees if drops to less than 20 hp.

#### STATISTICS

- Str 16, Dex 18, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 12 Base Atk +6; Grp +9
- Feats Deflect Arrows, Improved Unarmed Strike, Stunning Fist, Weapon Focus (unarmed), Weapon Finesse
- Skills Balance +11, Escape Artist +14, Hide +12, Jump +10, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +8, Move Silently +12, Spot +8, Tumble +12
- SQ poison use, trapfinding, trap sense +1
- Gear +4 bracers of armor, +3 amulet of mighty fists, +2 ring of deflection.

## 27. Privy

This cramped bathroom is filthy as none of the cultists have bothered to clean it since they moved in. The head of an old woman rots in one of the cesspits here and flies swarm about (see area 31).

## 28. Gaming Room (EL 8)

This spacious chamber is filled with tables, one of which is covered in green felt and has several colorful spheres laid about on it. A rack of slender sticks rests on one wall, and a bar juts from another with a wide assortment of brandy displayed atop it.

This is where Silas entertained on rare occasions, usually inviting a few of his friends to enjoy a late night game of dice and cards. His favorite game is star strike, played on a felt green table (also called mole hunt in some circles).

Creatures: A pair of cultists named Ditan and Jarmo has fallen in love with star strike, using sticks to knock colorful spheres about the green table day and night, and applying far too much chalk to the sticks' ends. Ditan and Jarmo were both followers of an apocalyptic cult of monks in Harkasa who believed the stars were "other worlds" and one day a race of beings from one would lay waste to this one. They were "liberated" from the cult's influence when Brisly slaughtered them. Ditan and Jarmo survived because they immediately betrayed the rest when Brisly's agents captured them. They have repaid her in kind, by being the first two to sign on with Armand when he revealed he had no intention of serving the Cult of the Red Goddess.

The pair are fairly absorbed in the game, so much so that a noisy combat (or the falling chandelier) in area 25 is the only thing that will break their concentration (they ignore any other sounds heard). If they detect intruders in area 25, they rush there to join in the fray.

Development: If captured alive, these two cough up information about the other cultists. The most important tidbit they know is about Daargrang. The hobgoblin approached these two hoping to secure their aid when the time comes to move against Armand, and they feigned mild interest in case the hobgoblin succeeds. These two inform the party that Daargrang plans to betray Armand and he may help them if they seek to apprehend or destroy the alchemist.

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#### Ditan and Jarmo

LE male human monk 6 Medium humanoid Init +4; Senses Listen +8, Spot +8 Languages Common

CR 6

#### DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 17, flat-footed 14 (+4 bracers of armor, +3 Dex, +4 Wis) hp 34 (6d8+6) Fort +6, Ref +8, Will +9; evasion, still mind

#### OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

- Melee mwk quarterstaff +7/+7 (1d6+2) or
- unarmed +5/+5 (1d8+2)
- Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft. Special Attacks flurry of blows, ki strike (magic), stunning fist (DC 16)

### TACTICS

- Before Combat The cultists Hide and Move Silently hoping to surprise foes or slink up to them.
- During Combat The cultists join the fray in area 25 if they detect it, flanking a PC. One stuns the enemy with punishing fists and kicks while the other lays into them with their quarterstaff. If they have the opportunity to do so they grapple a spellcaster.
- Morale These turncoats aren't particularly brave, and they flee or surrender if reduced to less than 10 hp.

#### **STATISTICS**

Str 14, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 10 Base Atk +4; Grp +10 Feats Deflect Arrows, Improved

- Grapple, Improved Trip, Improved Unarmed Strike, Snatch Arrows, Stunning Fist, Weapon Focus (quarterstaffs), Weapon Finesse Skills Balance +11, Hide +12, Jump +10, Listen +8, Move
- Silently +11, Spot +8, Tumble +13 SQ purity of body, slow fall 30 ft. Gear +4 bracers of armor, red robes and sandals.

Otherwise they know very little of use, but can basically describe the abilities of Shiggles and Ulina.

**Treasure:** The spirits in this room are of exquisite quality. One bottle of imported Arsendros Brandy is worth 120 gp, and about four other bottles are worth 20 gp each.

# - The House that Blood Built -

## 29. Music Room (EL 5)

These adjoining rooms are homey and inviting. The stiff air of formality in the dining hall melts away here with a cozy fire burning in the hearth. A few leather chairs are arranged about the hearth and a mahogany table, beyond lies a small stage and rows of benches for spectators. On stage a man in a bright red cloak, an extravagant moustache dominating his face, juggles six knives with ease, while next to him writhes a woman with emerald green hair clothed only in the coils of a large serpent wrapped around her. Behind both a large minotaur hefts two large anvils, one in each meaty fist, high above his horned head.

These adjoining rooms are where Justicar Verdane entertained his guests with wild displays of skill and melodious musical exhibitions. Live performances were a regular occurrence in those happier days, but the Justicar also paid a visiting magicker a hefty ransom to enchant the stage here to produce a few illusory performers to dazzle guests when performers couldn't be booked in advance or failed to show up. The minotaur, juggler and snake charmer are all the product of a permanent programmed image (CL 12th; DC 20). They perform as the PCs enter, the mustached juggler laughing as he throws the whirling blades, the snake charmer revealing more of her charms to the audience, and the minotaur snarling at the crowd as he shows off his impossible strength.

**Creature:** The true threat in this room lies smoldering in the hearth. The same wizard associate of Silas who supplied him with the invisible stalkers in area 4 also gave the kindly alchemist a large fire elemental to help him in the laboratory, heating alchemical agents with its searing flames.

This elemental is bound to Silas' service just as the stalkers are, and likewise cannot tell his personas apart. Armand commanded the elemental to hide in the hearth here as a roaring fire, and then attack anyone who enters this room. The elemental is not particularly wily, but it does wait until the PCs are distracted by the illusion before blasting out of the hearth and attacking.

The elemental very well may burn down the apartments unless the PCs put a stop to the spreading flames it leaves in its wake. Armand could care less. He left the elemental here right before he left his old apartments for good, adjourning to his clockwork winery to oversee the final stage of his plot. If the elemental consumes the musty old apartments that held him prisoner for three decades and erases all evidence of his wrongdoing, so much the better.

Large Fire Elemental: hp 60, see MM page 99.

## 30. Library Ground Floor (EL 7)

The walls of this spacious room are lined with massive oak book shelves, each filled mith old tomes bound in leather. Pillars hold the ceiling aloft and two spiral staircases ascend to an upper level of this sprawling library. Two stained glass doors open to a back patio which overlooks a common garden shared by several of the adjoining apartments, filled with rows of purple and white flowers.

This library contains tomes on a wide assortment of topics, but treatises on alchemy and law far outnumber any other topics.

Creatures: Many of the books here are enchanted to defend the library from intruders and animate whenever someone enters without speaking the words "Lore and legend, scroll and tome, show me the answers I seek." These books fly off the shelves and gather in vortexes of slicing pages and battering leather spines. The living books swarm the party if they do not speak the pass-phrase.

Swarms of Living Books (6): hp 13, use the statistics for bat swarms, but doing bludgeoning damage rather than biting.

Development: Anyone taking the time to search this room carefully (DC 20 Search check) discovers one important clue to Armand's alchemical work. The search teveals several well-used tomes concerned with a special alchemical component called "Blood of the Gorgon." The pages about this subject are ear-marked and well worn. Many have been inked with side notes or underlined almost obsessively.

One page in particular is of note (give the players a copy of Handout 3). Also if a PC studies these texts for four hours and makes a successful DC 20 Craft (alchemy) or Knowledge (arcana) check they learn that it

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is possible to cure an imbiber of *blood of the gorgon* by creating a counter-infusion that draws the *blood* from the infected host like pus from a wound. Dozens of elements and components are necessary to concoct it, but fortunately for the PCs they can all be found on Armand's well-stocked shelves in the laboratory (area 39).

The common mistake made by many foolish seekers of immortality is confusing the Blood of the Gorgon with the sanguineous fluid of a common gorgon. These stony bulls' blood has a certain potency, it is true, most notably the ability to shield items coated with it from certain divinations, but the Blood of the Gorgon referred to in classic texts denotes a far more elusive ingredient.

Many have taken this to mean the blood of a medusa and hundreds of these reclusive menaces have been hunted and beheaded in hopes of attaining life everlasting. Again, while the blood of a snake-haired queen is a powerful element, it pales in comparison to the might of the Blood of the Gorgon. The true Blood of the Gorgon, as referred to in the Sanctis Alchemai, is the blood of a strange creature, whose true origin remains a mystery. Many texts refer to her as the Mother of Gorgons, and perhaps she is the womb from which the more commonplace horrors of gorgons (the common bull variety, or medusa, or some postulate both) are spawned.

This Mother of Gorgons resembles a medusa in many ways, though ber body is bloated and her breasts hang grotesquely, like sacs full of roiling liquid. Serpents sprout from her head, but her torso and arms are also writhing nesting grounds of venomous snakes all constantly hungry for human blood. Her eyes are sunken pits wherein wriggling larvae spawn into great clouds of blood flies. A few fragmented bits of lore claim she mated with a titante bull and her offspring grew either in his or her own image. Heroes sent against her stabbed her with silver, but none vanquished her.

Her blood is the stuff of legends. They say an elixir can be wrought from her blood that grants everlasting life to those who imbibe it and grants them physical power beyond belief. True as this may be, most of

the early sages warn that such infusions, even as they invigorate the drinker's body, are perilous to their soul. The evil that runs in the Mother's veins cannot be burned away, even by the most skilled alchemist. One cannot distill power from the evil that festers in the Blood of the Gorgon without retaining that taint, and any who drink it find their darkest unspoken urges given unnatural life.

Still it is rumored by some that the perfect host exists. A man so foul and corrupted with evil that the Blood's malignant properties only bolster him further. If such a vile man were to drink an infusion of the Mother's Blood, he might become like a god, and know no equal in dark power. Let us pray these tales are just the cloudspinning musings of bygone sages.

## 31. Kitchens (EL 2)

These well-provisioned kitchens are loaded with shelves of utensils, sacks of grain, and plenty of flour for the large and impressive wood oven on one wall. Casks of oil, a butter churn, a bucket of milk and crates of eggs have been scattered about the room haphazardly, and broken eggs lie stinking on the floors.

These kitchens were once kept spotless by Old Marya, one of the few servants Silas kept on after his mother perished. Now Old Marya's head floats in the putrid privy, and the cultists raid these kitchens whenever a hunger takes them. They have made a gods' awful mess of the place and a food fight erupted a few days ago between Ditan, Jarmo and Shiggles.

**Creature:** The cultists are at war with an old dust mephit, named Curdles, who has lived in the kitchens for decades. Old Marya fed the little menace since she was a girl and the servants tolerated him, mostly because they couldn't get rid of him. He hides in the chimneys and in spaces behind some of the cupboards.

Curdles loved to play pranks and make trouble for everyone in the house, but since Armand took over, he's been despondent. Curdles loved Old Marya like the mother he never knew. Since he found out the cultists murdered the old servant, Curdles has begun a reign of terror, putting choking dust in their food, attacking cultists in the night with cutlery and pots and pans, breathing itchy dust at them, and basically making life bothersome for the intruders.

When the PCs enter, Curdles assumes they are cultists returned to try and kill him again. He springs from a cupboard breathing dust at the PCs. If he realizes the party is not allied with the cultists he relents and apologizes (something that doesn't come easily to Curdles). He offers to help the party against the cult.

Curdles, the Dust Mephit: hp 13, *MM* page 181.

Development: Curdles knows nearly everything about the disturbed boy and the man he became. If the party asks him about Silas Armand, Curdles whistles low and mutters "Sick boy, sick sick boy!" He relates how Silas was pretty much an evil wretch from a young age, but he changed after his mother hung herself. He says "Started talking to himself then, like two boys in one body. Bad boy go away, good boy try and live, but at night he scream lots... he afraid of bad boy, afraid he come back!"

In his own simple way, Curdles can relate pretty much the entire story of Silas Armand and anyone who can muddle through his ranting learns a very important fact: Silas is a split persona, but the real "Silas Armand" is the evil that now reigns in his psyche, the personality of Armand. Silas is just a mask he wore to hide his true evil and one that took control after his mother's suicide.

Curdles creeps around the apartments a great deal and can warn the PCs about the ghost of Beatrix claiming "The Matron of the House! She lives but does not! Do not speak with her, she'll steal your soul, make you claw your own eyes out your head!"

Curdles also knows Armand smeared something on Daargrang's doorknob every night while the hobgoblin was patrolling the apartments. Curdles also knows a great deal about Ulina and claims she is "the new Matron! She hates! HATES! HATES! Do not go upstairs!"

The other cultists are all a blur to Curdles, he calls them "stupid bloody robes!" He cries if the PCs mention the cultists claiming: "They murder Old Marya!" He breaks into



noisy sobs and becomes utterly useless for a few rounds (and his sobs may draw the attentions of the cultists in area 26).

# 32. The Grand Balcony

This illustrious upper landing sports a vaunted ceiling of white marble above and glorions tapestries depicting a unicorn and elven maiden rider on one wall, opposite a hideous wyvern.

This grand balcony overlooks area 22. The creature located here is detailed there.

# 33. Beatrix' Room (EL 8)

This room has not been disturbed for an age. A thick layer of dust coats the entire room and all its furnishings. A frilly and lustrous bed rests against one wall, the floral meaving of the blankets and pillow barely visible beneath the collected grime. A few chairs rest in one corner of the room, a table in another and some old shelves, also obscured by years of dust.

This bedchamber was Beatrix' bedchamber after Justicar Verdane passed away and she vacated the master suite. She hung herself here 30 years ago when her mind finally buckled under Armand's constant manipulation. This event shattered Armand's psyche as well, allowing his "mask" of Silas to assume dominance until the taste of the *blood of the gorgon* allowed Armand to wrest the reins from Silas a few weeks past.

Creature: Beatrix' much tormented soul does not rest easy. Life was never kind to her, Impregnated by a wandering ne'er-do-well with a devilish smile and sultry eyes, she slaved to make a life for her and her bastard son Silas, finally agreeing a loveless marriage with the elderly Justicar Verdane who was much taken with her beauty.

She shared the wrinkly old magistrate's bed for years until he finally passed on. At last Beatrix thought to cultivate some joy from her tattered life, as an heiress to his fortunes. But she discovered her own son was a budding sociopath, and it destroyed her. She tried to pretend she didn't know and blamed the boy's absentee father for his grotesque acts, but after he murdered a kitchen maid, a darling girl Beatrix adored as her own daughter, she finally hung herself.

# - The House that Blood Built -

## CR 9

- CN female human (ghost) commoner 2/ aristocrat 6
- Medium undead (incorporeal) Init +4; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +12, Spot +12
- Languages Common

### DEFENSE

Beatrix

- AC 20, touch 20, flat-footed 16; incorporeal (+6 deflection, +4 Dex)
- hp 54 (8d12)
- Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +6; turn resistance +4 OFFENSE
- Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect)
- Melee draining touch +10 touch (1d4 ability drain)
- Special Attacks draining touch, horrific appearance (DC 21), manifestation, *telekinesis* (DC 20)

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat Beatrix makes no special preparations for combat, other than standing so as many targets as possible can see her horrific appearance.
- During Combat In the first round Beatrix unleashes her horrific appearance and then snarls and hurls dangerous opponents off their feet and against the wall with telekinesis. After this Beatrix employs her draining touch, using Combat Expertise to maximum effect as well.
- Morale If Beatrix is reduced to below 20 hit points she flees through the wall to area 35, seeking out "little Silas' wife" Ulina to aid her in battle against these intruders. Beatrix fights until destroyed, rejuvenating on the following morning.

#### STATISTICS

- Str 10, Dex 18, Con -, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 22 Base Atk +5; Grp—
- Feats Ability Focus (horrific appearance), Combat Expertise, Dodge, Weapon Focus (touch)
- Skills Bluff +12, Craft (alchemy) +6, Diplomacy +18, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +7, Listen +12,

Now her ghost haunts her old bedchambers (and occasionally glides about on the second floor "looking in on" Bertram in area 34, much to his horror). Beatrix appears very much alive, though she seems sallow and pale. She appears as she did in life—a radiant red headed beauty with deep green eyes and creamy white skin. She wears a flowing green and blue gown with tiny rubies sewn in. Anyone making a DC 15 Spot check realizes she does not upset the dust as she moves.

Profession (midwife) +6, Sense Motive +7, Spot +12 SQ rejuvenation

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

- Draining Touch (Su) When Beatrix hits a living target with her incorporeal touch attack she rains 1d4 points from any one ability score she selects. On each such successful attack, the ghost heals 5 hp damage to itself. Against nonethereal opponents Beatrix adds her Dex modifier to the attack roll.
- Horrific Appearance (Su) Beatrix's rictus causes any living creature within 60 feet who views her to immediately take 1d4 points of Strength, Dexterity and Constitution damage unless they succeed on a DC 21 Fortitude save. A creature that successfully saves cannot be affected by her horrific appearance again for 24 hours.
- Manifestation (Su) Beatrix can only be harmed by other incorporeal creatures, magic weapons or spells with a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. A manifested ghost can pass through solid objects at will and its own attacks pass through armor. Beatrix always moves silently. Beatrix can be attacked by opponents on either the ethereal or Material plane while manifested. Her incorporeality protects her from opponents on the Material plane as described above but not from opponents on the ethereal plane. Beatrix always manifests.
- Telekinesis (Su) Beatrix can use telekinesis as a standard action (caster level 12th). Once she uses this power she must wait 1d4 rounds before doing so again.
- Rejuvenation (Su) Beatrix can only be permanently destroyed if Silas is killed and his body is brought before her. Otherwise she restores herself every morning if brought below 0 hit points.

Beatrix is overjoyed to have "friends of little Silas" over and offers to make them lemonade. She plays the part of the doting hostess, treating all of the PCs as children. If anyone refuses to play along, or makes any negative comment about Silas Armand, she flies into a deranged rage and shows her true form. As the PCs look on, Beatrix' neck snaps like a thick branch and her feet jerk as if she just hit the end of her rope. She soils herself, her eyes bulge horribly, and her teeth crack together shattering to bloody shards (treat

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this as her Horrific Appearance). She then attacks mercilessly while moaning "leave my little Silas be!"

If the PCs play along they can learn a great deal about Armand. The demented alchemist took great delight in tormenting his mother's ghost with his sick and evil plans. Beatrix knows her son is planning to poison most of the city with his *blood elixir*, but she cannot admit it to herself or others aloud. Instead she talks gaily of "how much little Silas enjoys spending time at the family winery on the edge of the city, always making new and wonderful vintages there!" Revealing the location of the winery and harping on Armand's activities is how Beatrix aids the party even through her madness.

## 34. Bertram's Room (EL 4)

This lavish bed chamber is decorated with bright colors and a host of animal toys lined up against the wall: a horse, tiny griffons, elephants, bears and lions. The large bed is piled high with downy pillows and a quilt with a majestic landscape and frolicking unicorns. Shelves of wooden toys, some siege engines, a fully rendered castle and a couple of clockwork figures hang on the walls.

This chamber was Silas' boyhood room. He had every toy and luxury a boy could want, but Armand always found other things (and people) to play with instead.

**Creatures:** When Armand was a vicious little child, he pushed the butler's son, a young blond-haired boy named Bertram, down a flight of stairs. The fall ruptured the boy's spine, leaving him alive, but crippled and slightly brain damaged. His mother immediately had the boy taken to the master suite (area 35) to be cared for day and night. Armand took great pleasure in visiting young Bertram's room at night and tormenting the disabled child.

When his mother died and Silas seized control over his body, he moved Bertram to his own boyhood room and spent hours reading to the young boy every day. He worked hard to atone for Armand's horrid crimes, caring for Bertram, seeing to the poor man's every need. However, when Armand returned recently he picked right up where he left off: torturing poor Bertram for sport.

CR 6

Armand has left a vicious little construct here to torment Bertram. When Armand was a spoiled boy, his mother hired a wizard to make him a living toy bear—a homunculus of sorts that Armand named Saggins. The creature slowly became a reflection of its master, a malignant little thing that delighted in cruelty. Silas locked the hideous thing in one of the laboratory cells (where he kept the few animals he experimented on). Armand recently released his boyhood friend and gave it a new charge—taking "good care" of Bertram.

The living toy has seen better days. One of his button eyes is missing and much of his stuffing is hanging out his grimy body. Armand added nasty talons made from finger bones, and filed-down human teeth are set in the bear's mouth. When Saggins hears someone approaching the room, he hides among the other toy animals—a wooden horse, some fur-covered lions—and waits until the party draws near Bertram before attacking.

Development: If the PCs capture Saggins, he sputters and snarls blaming the PCs for "making master big!" Saggins is unhappy because Armand is all grown up and now has more important things to do than torture animals and other little boys. In his rage he assumes the PCs are the reason Armand spends most of each day performing alchemical experiments. He offers no useful information and cannot be compelled to betray his beloved master.

Bertram, on the other hand, is a useful source of intelligence for the PCs. This atrophied little man's life has been a sad one. Since Armand's return he has been shackled to the headboard where Saggins administered burning liquids into his veins.

Though the fall down the stairs long ago left him a little slow, Bertram isn't the half-wit he pretends to be. He finds Armand tortures him less when he feigns utter idiocy. If the invalid doesn't even comprehend why he is being hurt, it saps some of the thrill of tormenting him.

Bertram remembers things quite well and he can tell the PCs all about Armand's twisted childhood and how he would hide behind "Silas" when adults suspected him of

## Saggins, the Bear

CE male homunculus rogue 5 Tiny construct Init +8; Senses Listen +10, Spot +10 Languages Common

#### DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 16, flat-footed 14; uncanny dodge (+4 Dex, +2 Size, +4 soli-silk shirt)

hp 27 (2d10 and 5d6)

Fort +1, Ref +8, Will +3; evasion

# OFFENSE

Spd 20 ft.; fly 50 ft. (good) Melee mwk syringe +11 touch (see below)and

bite +5 (1d4+1 plus poison) Ranged mwk syringe +11 ranged touch (see below)

Space 2 1/2 ft.; Reach 0 ft.

Special Attacks alchemical syringes, poison (DC 15, sleep 1 min/sleep 5d6 min), sneak attack +3d6

## TACTICS

Before Combat Saggins hides among the other toys, hoping to gain a surprise round.

During Combat Saggins uses his syringes for ranged touch attacks while staying hidden, then fights with his poison bite if he must.

Morale Saggins fights to the death and dies with a high-pitched squeak.

#### STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 18, Con -, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8

Base Atk +4; Grp -4

Feats Improved Initiative, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (syringe)
Skills Escape Artist +12 (+14 ropes), Hide +25, Listen +10, Move Silently +12, Spot +10, Use Rope +9
SQ construct traits
Combat Gear 2 hold person syringes, 1 inflict critical wounds syringe, 1 poison syringe

Other Gear soli-silk cloth armor

horrible acts. Bertram can also warn the PCs about Beatrix' ghost in area 33. If Bertram is freed and the PCs take a real interest in caring for him properly hereafter, or finding someone who will, grant the party a story award of 1,000 XP.

#### 35. Master Bedroom (EL 10)

This stately bedroom is spacious and impressive, with a high arched ceiling and hardwood polished floors. A large featherbed, its covers in disarray, stands against one wall. The top of a small worktable is stremm with tomes and a few beakers and small silver tongs. A bar against another wall is well plundered, the empty bottles cast haphazardly aside, and many shattered on the floor. A fire roars in the hearth here casting a hellish red glow about the chamber.

This is the master suite, where Silas spent many restless nights trying to keep the nightmares of his "brother" at bay. For the last few weeks Armand been taking his pleasures with captured victims in the bed and drinking himself into a rage on the nights he does not spend toiling in his lab.

**Creature:** The leader of the cultists left to guard Armand was a tall half-orc woman named Ulina, the daughter of a tribal chieftain and destined for greatness. Her mixed blood and her gender ensured that others kept her from her rightful place as ruler. When Brisly's cult attacked her tribe she embraced the Red Goddess, impressed with the hag's ability to rule over so many men. She hopes to supplant Brisly someday and finally claim her birthright of rule.

Brisly recognized Ulina's rebellious spirit, and saw her as a grave threat to her position in the cult. The hag decided to send her on a fool's errand of looking after Silas to keep her from the other cultists. Already disgruntled by this assignment, Ulina was further repulsed by the sniveling Silas. But the pathetic little alchemist changed overnight into a strong, impressive, almost animal force. He stove in another cultists' skull and proclaimed that those who did not follow him against Brisly would suffer likewise. Ulina challenged him, more out of pride than any loyalty to Brisly. The ferocious battle between the two began in the Dining Hall and ended up in Armand's bed. They have been lovers ever since.

Armand promised Ulina control of the Cult of the Red Goddess once Brisly is dead, and she trusted him to deliver—always a mistake with Armand. When Armand left to oversee the final stage of his evil plan, he infected the half-orc with the *blood elixir* first. Now the savage barbarian princess is a drooling blood-infused maniac wandering the upper level and waiting for her "beloved" to return. She spends most of

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# - The Bouse that Blood Built -

her time drinking and resisting the urge to go downstairs and slaughter the rest of the cultists for fun. When the PCs enter, she is overjoyed to finally have a target for her homicidal urges.

Ulina is wearing a final gift from her lover—a scent he calls Carnage, but which is a perfume mixed with a heavy dose of Kiss of Salhara (New Poison, see sidebar). If Daargrang is with the PCs still and draws within 5 feet of Ulina, he is exposed to the poison and succumbs to it. Likewise if any of the PCs touched the doorknob to Daargrang's chambers they are affected by it as well (Search DC 25, contact poison, Fort DC 20, 1d6 Con/2d6 Con).

Development: If taken alive (unlikely) Ulina offers the PCs little information, though she can be tricked into revealing where Armand went (the winery) with a DC 20 Bluff check. The party might claim he left and is not returning or otherwise goad her into revealing Armand's location.

If the PCs Search the room a DC 10 Search check turns up Silas' diary. The well worn leather-bound parchment tells of the alchemist's fear of his "brother's" return, interspersed with happier accounts of helping the downtrodden and meeting good friends (like the PCs). Even these are sullied by comments like "even as old Jankro thanked me for curing his whooping cough, I could feel Armand struggling, trying to make me grasp the toothless old man's head and dash his brains out on the wall behind him" or "I wavered in concentration when my guests were over last night. I didn't realize Armand has subtly exchanged hemlock for the vanilla extract. The dessert was ruined, and if I hadn't noticed moments before serving it, my dear friends would be dead. I hate my brother. I wish he would just leave me be."

The last few entries discuss the strange visitors in the night and the "bizarre monstrosity they want me to experiment on. Could it be the true Mother of Gorgons? The good I could do with her blood. The diseases I could cure... it's worth anything." The last entry in the diary is dated over two weeks ago.

Besides Silas' diary, the party also finds the most recent ledgers and accounts of the Armand estate in the desk here. These

## **Bloody Ulina (Raging) CR 10**

CE female half-orc barbarian 8 Medium humanoid Init +7; Senses Listen +13, Spot +1 Languages Common, Orc

## DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 17; improved uncanny dodge (+5 +2 hide armor, +3 Dex, +4 amulet of natural armor, -2 rage) hp 136 (8d12+72) Fort +15, Ref +5, Will +5 DR 1/-

#### OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft. Melee +2 greatclub +22/+17 (1d6+16) and blood drinking tongue +17 (1d6+11

and blood drain) Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.

Special Attacks blood drain, rage 3/day TACTICS

- Before Combat Ulina injects herself with her syringe of haste before joining the fray.
- During Combat Ulina closes to melee and lays waste with her greatclub. She Power Attacks for 5 unless she has trouble hitting with both her attacks.

Morale Ulina fights to the death.

**S**TATISTICS

- Str 33, Dex 16, Con 28, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14 Base Atk +8; Grp +19
- Feats Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greatclub)
- Skills Climb +19, Intimidate +14, Jump +19, Listen +13, Survival +9
- SQ fast movement, trapfinding, trap sense +2, blood sense
- Blood Drain (Ex) Whenever Ulina strikes with her blood drinking tongue she drains 1d4 Constitution from her victim and gains 5 temporary hit points. These temporary hit points persist for one hour.
- Combat Gear syringe with haste, syringe with potion of cure serious wounds
- Other Gear +2 greatclub, +2 hide armor

financial statements show that in the last few weeks, Armand has liquidated nearly all his assets to pay skilled clockwork craftsmen to make "enhancements" to his family's old winery, located on the outskirts of Zobeck

Treasure: Besides his diary, Silas kept his emergency funds here beneath a loose board under his bed. A DC 25 Search check locates a small silver box (itself worth 50 gp)

containing 6 garnets (80 gp each), 4 sapphires (120 gp each) and a pouch with 250 gp and 100 sp inside.

## New Poison: Salhara

Salhara, a figure of legend in old tales of the desert kingdom of Reth-Saal, was a beautiful princess, daughter of a great pasha. Salhara led a secret second life as an assassin, furthering her elderly father's political interests by murdering the kindly old man's enemies.

The Caress of Salhara (and its trigger, the Kiss) was a poison of her own design used to frame dozens of courtesans and prostitutes for murders she herself laid the seeds to, but was miles away when death took the victim. The poison is difficult to make, but is a favorite among skilled killers and unscrupulous alchemists.

Contact poison, Fort DC 20, 1d6 Con/2d6 Con

## 36. Bath

This gilded bath is where Justicar Verdane, Beatrix and Silas took leisurely baths. This room has not seen use in a few weeks now.

## 37. Library Upper Balcony (EL 7)

A brass-railed balcony runs the perimeter of this room. Tall wooden shelves stretching to the ceiling are filled with hundreds of books. Two spiraling staircases descend from this balcony level to a large open air library below.

The books on this upper level are more concerned with esoteric subjects in which Silas dabbled over the years including horticulture, gardening, economics, engineering, and religion. None of these tomes contain anything particularly useful or interesting to the PCs, but feel free to sprinkle in a book or two connected to your campaign or to a mystery or three vexing your PCs' personal lives beyond this adventure.

Creature: The same enchantment described in area 30 also affects the books here, though these swarms of living books only attack once (either in area 30 or here).

Treasure: A few volumes are quite valuable. An Appraise DC 23 reveals the 20 volumes are worth 100 gp each. The remainder is worth very little, given the difficulty of transporting 2,000 pounds of heavy books. One of these 100 gp volumes

is the **Sanctis Alchemai**, which mentions the Mother of Gorgons. Once read, which requires a full day, using this books as a reference (a one-minute action) grants +2 to Knowledge checks related to the *blood elixir*. Unless a player knows what they are looking for to start with (Craft (alchemy) DC 30) and reads all the titles, the only way to recognize the book's import is to look through all the books (Search DC 25, +2 to the roll for 5+ ranks in Craft (alchemy)).

Swarms of Living Books (6): hp 13 each, immune to weapon damage, 1d6 wounding swarm damage/swarm each round.

#### 38. Study

The hidden stairs descend to a small masonry chamber. The air is cool down here and the smell of strange solvents assaults the nose. A wooden desk rests against one wall here with parchment, and inkwell and quill lying atop it.

This is Silas' private study, where he makes copious notes on the experiments he conducts in area 39. The bookshelves here contain some of Armand's most detailed notes on the *blood elixir*. Anyone succeeding on a DC 20 Craft (alchemy) or Knowledge (arcana) check learns how to make an antidote which draws the elixir from their blood of the infected victim.

The materials and tools necessary to concoct such an antidote are next door in area 39. Armand's detailed logs record the results of testing the *blood elixir* in this lab. Several entries implicate Armand in infecting Dromov, Palkado and Tysha. Others detail how he slipped the elixir to the PCs.

### 39. Laboratory (EL 9)

This massive subterranean chamber is filled with cold stone operating tables, counters arrayed with scalpels, pliers, needles, syringes and mixing devices, and shelves filled with various jars and vials containing everything from bright yellow powders to strange cerulean ichor. Larger jars contain glossy eyeballs extracted from bizarre creatures and a piece of an enormous set of entrails, perhaps draconic or elephantine. All around the room strange metal coils spring from the ground like curled tentacles of dull blue steel. This laboratory was a place of sanctified healing under Silas's care. Now it is a freak show of terrors. Armand saws men apart just to watch them scream and burns out their eyes with slow-acting acids. He also concocts his *blood elixir* using the many alchemical compounds and of course his special ingredient—*Blood of the Gorgon*.

**Treasure:** Several empty syringes and syringe bolts lie on a shelf, along with three masterwork clockwork light crossbows. Besides the empty bolts, four syringes of *cure serious wounds* remain. Also, the ingredients needed to fabricate the antidote to the Blood of the Gorgon are found here in plentiful supply.

**Development:** With a DC 20 Search or Craft (alchemy) check a PC observes that this laboratory was recently used to make a large batch of *blood elixir*. Ingredients lie strewn about, and notes are scattered all over the floor). Several shelves have been emptied of their contents and most of the instruments and alchemical tools have been taken elsewhere (to area 48 in Chapter Five). Armand's experiments and foul plans continue elsewhere.

Anyone who succeeds on a DC 25 Search check finds several detailed equations concerning mixing the *blood elixir* with alcohol, as well as some engineering sketches of large mixing vats such as those one might find in a clockwork manufactory. Anyone examining these notes and succeeding on a DC 20 Knowledge (architecture and engineering) check notes mechanical details of the mixing vats that identify them as grape crushers in a clockwork winery.

#### Laboratory Trap

When Armand left his laboratory, he had no intention of returning. The giant metal coils usually charge elixirs and create solutions through electrical output, but now they are set to overload. As soon as anything conductive (a human being for example) steps between them the coils flare with tendrils of sizzling electricity and lash out. The entire room becomes a lightning storm.

CR 9

If the coils are not deactivated within three rounds, the electricity ignites several unstable alchemical compounds as well and an explosion rocks the laboratory. If this occurs the lab's tools and compounds are all destroyed or rendered inert and no antidote for the **blood elixir** can be processed here.

A DC 20 Search check detects the trap, but a DC 25 Disable Device check is necessary to disarm it. Anyone moving within 5 feet of a coil or moving between two of them sets off the trap, sending cascades of lightning through the room and inflicting 5d6 hp electricity damage. A Disable Device check can be made every round thereafter to shut it down. Destroying a coil (or warping it with magic) also disrupts the trap (hardness 10, hp 20, Break DC 25).

Anyone succeeding on a DC 20 Knowledge (arcana) or Spellcraft check realizes that casting any electricity-based spell at one of the coils will also shut down the trap. If the trap isn't disabled by round three, the room explodes in a ball of alchemical fire inflicting 5d6 fire and 5d6 acid damage to everyone in the area (Reflex half for each effect).

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# - The House that Blood Built -

## **Face Your Inner Nightmares**

When and if the PCs concoct and imbibe the antidote to the *blood elixir*, you have the fun opportunity to throw an interesting fight their way. The antidote forces the infected humors and tainted blood out of the victim's system. Any affected PCs who apply the antidote to themselves vomit disgusting infected blood for a full round, suffering 1d4 Con damage (no save, since they ingested the antidote willingly).

The horribly nauseated PC doubles over and vomits forth what seems like gallons of blood. Before the party's eyes the blood coalesces into a mewling half-formed bloody creature (a bloody version of the PC). These blood doubles, forcibly expelled from their host, are considerably weaker than the ones encountered in Chapter One of this adventure. Their link with the victim severed, they are sapped of much of their homicidal power. Use the PCs' own stats, but add the blood drinking tongue as a secondary attack and give these doubles the Multiattack bonus feat. The blood doubles of the PCs immediately try to kill their former host for forsaking them.

If one infected PC takes the antidote, the other infected party members' bloody doubles sense the agony of this one and try to pull free of their PC hosts (as full on bloody creatures using the template in Appendix A) before they take the antidote. Bloody doubles usually can only emerge when a PC is asleep (though they need not return to their host as evidenced in the case of Bloody Dromov and Palkado).

Forcibly emerging while the PCs are conscious is incredibly difficult and allows the PC to resist them. Each infected PC gains a DC 20 Fortitude or Will save (their choice) to fight the blood double down. If they succeed the blood double cannot try again for 10 minutes (giving the party time to take their antidotes).

# 40. Cells (EL varies)

These simple stone cells housed animal test subjects when Silas ran the laboratory. Now they contain some of Armand's more gruesome handiwork. As soon as anyone enters area 39, the doors here unlatch releasing these mad abominations to stagger about and attack the party.

# Armand's Experiments

**Proboscis-Eyed Harlot:** A woman in a ragged dress lies on the floor in this chamber sobbing pitifully. She turns her face to the entryway and shows a dreadful visage. Her eyes are gone, and in their place, two long proboscises sprout, leaking bloody tears, as she wails in agony.

This streetwalker was kidnapped by Armand, who didn't like her eyes, so he cut them out. He replaced her eyes with giant stirge proboscii, and reconnected her esophagus to them through her sinuses. Now the only way she can get sustenance is by sinking her proboscii into a living creature and sucking their blood.

# Proboscis-Eyed Harlot CR 6

CN female human commoner 6 Medium humanoid Init +8; Senses blindsense 60 ft.; Listen +7, Spot +7 Languages Common

## DEFENSE

AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 10 (+4 Dex) hp 29 (6d4+12+3) Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +3

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft.

Melee proboscis eyes +8 touch (1d4 Con damage)

Special Attacks proboscis eyes

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat The harlot hides her freakish face and eyes if possible, sobbing uncontrollably and hoping someone draws close to help her.
- During Combat As soon as someone moves within range she whirls about and sinks her proboscis eyes into them, drinking deep (she was starving to death in her cell).

Morale The harlot gurgles and begs for death as she feeds. She embraces oblivion after the hell she's been through.

#### STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 18, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 12 Base Atk +3; Grp—

Feats Dodge, Improved Initiative, Toughness, Weapon Focus (proboscis eyes)

Skills Listen +7, Profession (harlot) +7, Spot +7 Heads a' Tails: This cell contains a thin wirymuscled man on all fours. His bulging neck sprouts an octopus tentacle; meanwhile his head is sown atop his tailbone. Somehow he is still alive and moans and gibbers horribly, hovering between various levels of awareness of the obscenity he has become. This poor wretch was once a guardsman named Karthag, but now Armand calls him Heads a'Tails. The tentacle has a mind of its own, and forces the man-thing to scamper about on his hands and feet so it can try to strangle and crush things.

### Heads A' Tails

CR 6

CN male human fighter 6 Medium humanoid Init +5; Senses Listen +0, Spot +0 Languages Common DEFENSE

AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10 (+1 Dex) hp 53 (6d10+18) Fort +8, Ref +3, Will +2

OFFENSE

- Spd 20 ft. Melee tentacle +12/+7 (1d8+6) Special Attacks Improved Grab, Crush
- (tentacle damage every round grapple is maintained)

## TACTICS

- Before Combat Karthag bemoans his fate.
- During Combat In every round of combat Karthag uses a full attack with his tentacle.

Morale Karthag welcomes death.

# STATISTICS

Str 18, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 8, Wis 10, Cha 10 Base Atk +6; Grp +10

- Feats Greater Weapon Focus (tentacle), Improved Grapple, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (tentacle), Weapon Specialization (tentacle)
- Skills Climb +7, Jump +7, Profession (butcher) +3

Hundred Faces: This cell belongs to a horrid mangled man with deformed skin, once an apple cart pusher named Maltrin. On closer inspection, Maltrin's skin has been replaced with dozens of peeled off faces stitched together into a hide covering his entire body. This is terrible enough, but the myriad faces' mouths move, no sound coming out, their eyeless sockets crinkling as if they were trying to see. The pulling of the mouths tugs at the stitches lacing the faces together and thick blood and pus pours forth from the sutures. This plunges the man into sanity-shredding pain, and he lashes out in a mad rage.

### Hundred Faces (Raging) CR 6

CN male human barbarian 6 Medium humanoid Init +2; Senses Listen +2, Spot +2 Languages Common

#### DEFENSE

AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 8 (+2 Dex, -2 rage) hp 72 (6d12+30) Fort +10, Ref +4, Will +6

## OFFENSE

Spd 40 ft. Melee unarmed +12/+7 (1d3+5) Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft. Special Attacks rage 2/day

### TACTICS

Before Combat Hundred Faces rages. During Combat Hundred Faces closes with the nearest foe and pummels them madly. If he is only threatened by one enemy he grapples them. Morale Hundred Faces fights until slain.

#### **S**TATISTICS

Str 20, Dex 14, Con 21, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 8 Base Atk +6; Grp +11 Feats Improved Grapple, Improved Unarmed Strike, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (unarmed) Skills Climb +11, Intimidate +5, Jump +11



Sizzling Brains: A hideously ugly old woman named Kristina was one of the old folks cared for in the convalescent rooms adjoining Armand's apartments. When Armand was young, Kristina lived in the courtyard block in her own apartments and tormented the little boy incessantly by reporting his awful behavior to his mother, and smacking the young menace around when he talked back to her.

The alchemist was delighted to discover her living next door among the elders' courtyard. He decided the wrinkly old hag should suffer, so he abducted her in the night and then slowly melted her hands off enjoying her shrieks of agony. He also hooked up tubing from her abdomen to her brain—effectively lobotomizing the pathetic pained thing with her own stomach juices. Now she claws and staggers her way around the laboratory, her palsied blackened stumps reaching ineffectually for purchase on objects or doorknobs. She mutters nonsensically if spoken to.

Kristina is not a threat though she lurches threateningly at anyone she detects. If the old woman is damaged she moans horribly and dies, but not before her tubes burst loose from her head and spray everyone adjacent to her with stomach acid (1d2 acid damage).

### 41. Sewer Pipes

These large mortar tunnels connect Armand's apartments to a larger sewer cistern and offer the demented alchemist a way to leave and enter his home discreetly. These sewers run underneath the convalescent rooms next door as well, and he used these to abduct victims.

# Concluding this Chapter

fter their harrowing exploration of Armand's apartments and an immersion in the evil madness of his life, the PCs are armed with the cure to their own infection with the *blood elixir*, and may have earned themselves a potent weapon in the fight against Armand in Chapter Five. Hopefully the party also learned enough details of his evil scheme to pollute the city's favorite vintages to send them calling at his winery on the outskirts of Zobeck. The final confrontation awaits them there.

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# Troubleshooting the Hunt for Armand

If the PCs did not find the clues of the financial ledgers in area 35, or learn about the winery from Beatrix' ghost, or discern the meaning of the missing equipment and schematics in area 39, or otherwise coax the information about the winery from Ulina or another NPC, then you have to make sure the adventure continues smoothly.

You could leave things hanging at the end of this chapter for a bit, allowing the PCs to think Armand has fled the city and might return later. In this case, start another short adventure in the interim and come back to Chapter Five later, when a few more bloody doubles and bloody creatures (drunk on Armand's wine) start to prey on the city.

You may want to punish the PCs for not bothering to pick up the threads of the greater mystery and allow full scale bloody maybem to break out in the city after an entire shipment of Armand's wine infests the various cellars and inns throughout the city. In this case the PCs battle for the soul of all Zobeck, including a brutal and bloody campaign of urban warfare fought against a horde of ravening blood maniacs. This approach is beyond the scope of this adventure, but may make a fun twist or turn for your campaign if you so choose.

Otherwise, if the PCs dropped the ball on the clues, give them the chance to pick it up again. A mutual friend of the party and Armand's could inform them of his family winery on the outskirts of Zobeck. Maybe the Zobeck Guard comes to the rescue for once and digs up information on Armand's winery for the party. An eyewitness, one of the nosy neighbors who avoided becoming one of the alchemist's victims may have seen him leave with a wagon full of strange barrels heading for the north of the city, "where his old family winery sits on a hillside." Maybe an elderly friend of Justicar Verdane comes out of the woodwork to lament the evil infesting the old magistrate's home and remarks on how proud Verdane was of "his house and of course that old winery up on Smolten Hill.'

Give the party a strong hook, and they will find him.

# Swine into UBlood

Armand dreams of carnage and a deluge of blood to set the people of Zobeck awash in madness.

rmand has eluded the PCs, retreating to his winery to enact the final stage of his demented plan. If the PCs don't crush his evil schemes, Armand's blood elixir will find its way into hundreds of homes, inns, and pubs throughout the city, in the form of his wildly popular family vintage—Smolten Hill Red. If he succeeds, the city shall succumb to wholesale murder and random acts of carnage.

# The Twisted Vineyards

he Smolten Hill vineyard lies in Zobeck's rural southern hinterlands, an area called Vineyard Roads. Once a verdant stretch of lush green spotted with the vineyards and country villas of Zobeck's noble class, after the revolt 80 years ago, much of this region fell into decay. The vineyards and surrounding woods laid claim to the homes and castles here, encroaching steadily year after year until their creeper and ivy had clawed their way to the tallest spire.

During the revolt, the Verdane family gained prominence, and through subtle maneuvering of funds and title deeds Justicar Verdane's grandfather ended up the sole owner of a large plot in Vineyard Roads. Filled with rich vineyards, this plot became the cornerstone of the Verdane fortune. The family built a massive winery and a small community of workers grew up around it. The old clock tower Verdane built atop the winery was the center of a small flourishing community. Children and elders sat and played beneath its watchful hands as their fathers and mothers earned a daily wage within.

When hard times struck Zobeck, the Verdane family converted the winery to a clockwork system, putting their employees out of work. In recent years, an elderly



caretaker and his wife keep the mechanisms working properly and wagon crews arrive weekly to take casks and bottles of wine down into the city.

The path to Smolten Hill leads through tangling undergrowth and in the shadow of twisted old trees where entire noble families were hanged during the bloodiest nights of the revolt. Vineyard Roads is a place gone wild, a place where mournful things howl in the dark. A single mostly navigable road leads to the winery.

The Smolten Hill district lies away from the main merchant roads, and the deeply rutted track that leads to it is muddy and slow going. The distance from Zobeck to the rolling hills and small woods of Smolten Hill is barely a morning's ride, but the territory seems haunted by the past. A few tumbled chimneys remain visible from the roadside where the noble manor of the Hanshakes was burnt during the Great Revolt, 80 years ago.

The small forests have a chill about them, with leaves and shadows thick on the ground. The vineyards and fields of rye and flax seem untended and while a mournful bird sings, not much else stirs. Until you hear a rustle in the undergrowth, or perhaps the sound of a tramping traveler just around the bend.

Play up the dark and foreboding atmosphere of the trek to build tension up for the final showdown between the party and Armand. If you wish to spice up the trip use some of the following encounters along the way:

# The Mute Peddler

A spindly old man dragging a jangling cart of pots, pans, and other accoutrements behind him pulls up on the road ahead. He makes a small bow, grins, and gestures to his wares.

The old man grins madly and offers to trade with the PCs, though he uses only gestures to communicate. He cannot speak; if asked why he opens his mouth wide and shows them a mangled tongue.

The old man wants something shiny, and in exchange he offers a rusty short sword. If the party trades with him he smiles and goes on his way, whistling a lilting tune. If they refuse he grows grim faced and marches past them. Either way he vanishes into the mist in short order and no trace of his passing can be found.

The short sword he gave the PCs is actually a +2 *aberration bane short sword*. A simple DC 10 Craft (weaponsmithing) or Profession (blacksmith) check allows a PC to remove the thick layer of rust. If this check is not made, the magic sword still functions properly but takes a -1 to attack rolls.

If anyone makes a DC 25 Knowledge (local) check they remember a tale of an old mute peddler named Vago, who plied his wares all along Vineyard Roads. There were several strange disappearances in the years Vago wandered the vineyards. A wife would go out to draw water from the well and never return. A child flying a kite right behind their villa would simply vanish, their kite found tangled in a tree branch nearby.

The old peddler disappeared as well after a decade or so, but his cart was found along the roadside. Within it were sacks of finger bones belonging to at least 30 individual skeletons.



# The Clockwork Winery at Smolten Will

Exile of the Grove (EL 8) The PCs hear the sounds of battle ahead and spot a unicorn battling three savage owlbears. The badly wounded unicorn, named Mantilus, is the denizen of a nearby druid's grove.

The druid recently discovered Armand's vile experiments at the old winery and tried to intervene. The alchemist had the hapless druid drawn and quartered by the machine room (area 45). If the PCs aid Mantilus, the unicorn cures any wounds the party sustained in battle before curing himself, and thanks them with a regal bow.

If the PCs converse with the unicorn he tells them of his master's fate and warns them to avoid the winery at all costs. The unicorn will not venture there (the pollution of the clockwork winery is like deadly poison to him). Mantilus does not forget their kindness, however, and if he learns the party intends to battle those operating the winery he commends their peerless bravery. The unicorn departs, but Mantilus may come to the PCs' aid at any point later in their adventures if the DM wishes.

Mantilus, unicorn: hp 42 (currently 23), see *MM* page 250.

Owlbears (3): hp 52, see MM page 206.

# The Orphan Pup (EL 8)

As the PCs journey along the wending path they see a tiny wolf cub, shakily meandering down the road ahead. When the cub sees the PCs it whines and then turns back moving unsteadily up the road once more.

If the PCs follow the pup, or simply continue along their way, they see the baby wolf by the roadside around a turn in the path ahead. The poor thing is nuzzling the carcass of its dead mother. The large gray and black pelted wolf bleeds profusely from several jagged tears in its fur and the poor thing is riddled with giant quills along its flank, with one (the killing stroke) planted deep in its eye.

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As the PCs examine the carcass, the wolf pup's ears flatten against its tiny skull and it growls. Moments later, the pack of murderous howlers who killed its mother burst from the tree line.

Howlers (6): hp 39 each, MM page 154.

# The Clockwork Winery at Smolten Hill

molten Hill was once a lush paradise, its ivy-covered clock tower rising above the beauteous vineyards nearby and overlooking the clear waters of the Fandross River, a tributary of the River Argent that flows through Zobeck itself. Now the winery is a clockwork monstrosity of whirling, churning gears, hammering pistons and billowing black smoke. The river flows brackish and black, its waters tainted by the winery's alchemical effluent. The vineyards closest to the winery withered long ago.

# - Soline into Blood -



Walls: The old winery's quaint wooden structure was converted to a squatting fortress of granite and black iron. The magically reinforced walls here could repulse ballistae (hardness 20, hp 210, Break DC 45).

Fog: Before Armand assumed command, the winery's smoky filth was relegated mostly to areas 44 and 45. Now that the demented alchemist has the place running around the clock at full speed, a gray-black haze encircles the entire building and fills every area. Treat every area within the winery as filled with fog (partial concealment, 20% miss chance).

## 42. Storefront (EL 10)

Caustic smoke hangs heavy in the air within this stuffy shop. Shelves of wine bottles display the winery's finest vintages. A heavy oaken door lies beyond the counter at the rear of the shop. In the good old days, wealthy merchants on day trips to Vineyard Roads could stop in and sample the winery's wares. Some of the labels here are over 150 years old, and are much sought after, served at the most exclusive parties in Zobeck.

**Creatures:** Four particularly vile belkers drawn by the smoke from the factory arrived a few months ago. They find the pungent fumes extremely narcotic, driving them to blissful distraction and reducing them to babbling addicts. The belkers were pleased when Armand arrived and cranked the factory up to full operation around the clock. They serve Armand faithfully as watch dogs as long he continues to pour their favorite intoxicant into the air.

When intruders enter here, the belkers are nearly invisible in the smoky haze; they flow about the PCs and attack with a surprise round. These sick elementals are half-drunk because of the fumes of this place and suffer a -2 on all attacks.

**Belkers (4):** hp 38, see *MM* page 27. (+10 circumstance bonus to their Hide checks from the haze)

Treasure: A successful DC 20 Appraise check shows that the older vintage bottles here are worth 100 gp each. Ten such bottles sit on a special display against one wall, but Armand removed the label of one, replacing it with *blood elixir*-tainted wine direct from his vats. A DC 25 Search check notes the label's replacement and clotting in the bottle that betray it as a new bottle of wine manufactured by the machines in area 43.

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# 43. Processing Room (EL 10)

The whirl of machines, the incessant clank of steel on steel, and the chink of glass bottles are the instruments in a deafening orchestra on this huge factory floor. Huge metal arms churn the contents of three gigantic vats.

A line of spinning conveyors keeps barrels rolling and bottles buzzing past, each filled with blood red wine. Smoke spews from over-worked gears and exhaust vents. Everywhere clockwork machines turn, shift, and spin. The whole room seems alive.

The processing room is one colossal clockwork mechanism that churns grapes into fermented wine (with alchemical help to speed the fermentation). Iron arms collect the bottles into cases on the far wall and stack them ceiling high. The mechanism does not leave the room, but is fully animated within it.

**Creatures:** The devices have a malignant life of their own through Armand's considerable skills in clockworks and alchemy. The metal arms connect to a central steel cylinder hanging above.

They spring into action when the PCs enter, snatching them up and hurling them into the churning fermentation vats to be reduced to a batch of "special" vintage.

Cruel Machine (CR 8): hp 148, Gargantuan animated object, MM page 14; Melee +15/+15/+15+15 slam (2d8+10); Feats Improved Grab, Snatch.

Fermentation Vat Traps (3; CR 10 each): Mechanical; proximity trigger (alarm); automatic reset; multiple attacks, Grapple check to resist (+20 Grapple); Disable Device DC 30

Anyone hurled into the vats by the machine or falling into them is grappled, suffering 2d6 acid damage and 4d6 bludgeoning damage every round. Victims can attempt to escape the grapple (opposed Str or Dex) and climb out (DC 30), or they can rupture the side of the vat (Hardness 10, hit points 20 to open a hole, Break DC 20).

Ruptured vats: Acidic fermentation chemicals pour out in a 30 foot cone, inflicting 1d6 acid damage on anyone in the area (Reflex save DC 10 for half) and forcing a DC 15 Balance check (failure results in the PC being knocked prone).

# 44. Wine Cellar

This room is only accessible with a DC 25 Open Lock check or by forcing either set of doors (Hardness 10, hp 150, Break DC 30).

This long chamber is mostly smoke-free, The air here is cool and the thick walls glisten with frost. Shelving here is filled with thousands of bottles and barrels of wine, stacked up to the 30 foot ceiling.

This storehouse is filled with the twisted fruits of Armand's labors. Enough *blood elixir*-tainted wine rests here to poison thousands of people.

**Creatures:** Armand's recent descent into madness and evil has not gone unnoticed. A powerful pit fiend named Malkus-Zeer was much intrigued when his many spies informed him of the alchemist's plans. Malkus-Zeer is too busy with infernal plots of greater import to aid Armand directly, but he dispatched one of his minions to assist Armand. A diligent and long-serving hellcat named Charkaaz guards Armand's wine from possible tampering.

**Charkaaz:** hp 60, see *MM* page 54. **Tactics:** He begins stalking intruders as they search the room, picking a PC and pouncing on them.

Development: Over 1,000 bottles and 30 barrels of *blood elixir*-tainted wine are stored here, destined for wine cellars and inns all over Zobeck (and other cities). If the PCs destroy this wine, they have effectively ruined Armand's immediate plans (or at least delayed them). If you wish, you may decide that a few shipments, or even one lone barrel of the wine has already been sent to parts unknown, to sow further seeds for adventure.

## 45. Machine Room (EL 11)

This long corridor is filled with snapping metal jaws, gnashing gears and pistons slamming together with the force of a titan's fist. The ball is one long death trap of whirling steel, venting steam and smoke, and crushing counterweights.

These machines keep the vats and bottling line working at a furious pace. The machines are normally easy to navigate, but running at break-neck pace as they are now, they are incredibly treacherous. Machines (Hazard): Every round, anyone moving through the area takes 3d6 damage. PCs may make a DC 20 Reflex save (jerking out of the way), Tumble check (rolling through) or Strength check (stopping the mechanisms threatening to crush them) every round or be crushed, smashed and pounded by the hydraulics and crushing gear works and suffer 3d6 damage.

Anyone may make a DC 20 Knowledge (engineering) check to avoid the danger (calculating the whirling movements of the metal). Cultists and others intimately familiar with this area need not make checks to avoid the danger.

Creature: Only two of Armand's cultists accompanied him to the Winery, and they have positioned themselves here among the crushing metal jaws to ambush anyone who threatens their new master. Brekka is a gluttonous woman, a hugely obese sorceress who contracted a hideous disease years ago that caused her face to grow malformed with bulbous growths. She joined Brisly on the promise that the blood hag would heal her condition and restore her face. When Brekka realized Armand's skill in alchemy far outshone Brisly's supposed powers, she was among the first to join him in his rebellion. Armand has promised to devote his full attention to reversing her condition as soon as his blood elixir is spread throughout the countryside.

Gartango is a hulking mangy gnoll, and a long time companion of Brekka. Gartango became Brekka's flunky when his band of gnolls attacked the sorceress on the road and she enchanted him with a *charm monster* spell. Brekka has thoroughly brainwashed his, and his mind is so broken by the constant barrage of enchantment magic that he now drools and obeys her whim without her resorting to spellcasting at all. When she joined Armand, the gnoll followed.

When the PCs enter here, the gnoll and sorceress are waiting at the bend in the corridor (leading up to area 46), forcing the PCs to navigate the gears.



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# - Sovine into Blood -

## Brekka

CE female human sorcerer 8

**CR 8** 

Medium humanoid Init +4; Senses Listen +1, Spot +1 Languages Common, Gnoll

#### DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 18, flat-footed 14; mirror image (1d4 duplicates) (+4 mage armor, +4 shield, +4 Dex)

hp 34 (8d4+16) Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +7

OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft. Melee ranged touch + 8

Special Attacks spells

## Spells Known (CL 6th)

- 4<sup>th</sup> (4/day)—*confusion* (DC 20) 3<sup>rd</sup> (6/day)—*hold person* (DC 19),
- suggestion (DC 19) 2<sup>nd</sup> (7/day)-hideous laughter (DC 18) X2,
- mirror image 1<sup>st</sup> (7/day)—charm person (DC 17),
- mage armor, magic missile, ray of enfeeblement (+5 ranged touch), shield
- 0 (6/day)-arcane mark, daze (DC 16) X2, detect magic, ghost sound, light, mage hand, read magic

## TACTICS

Before Combat Brekka uses her wand of cat's grace on herself and Gartango and then casts mage armor, shield and mirror image on herself (included in

#### **CR 8**

Gartango (Raging) CE male gnoll barbarian 2/ rogue 5 Medium humanoid Init +3; Senses Listen +5, Spot +5 Languages Common, Gnoll

#### DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 11, flat-footed 17; improved uncanny dodge

(+4 +1 hide, +3 Dex, +5 natural, -2 rage) hp 93 (2d12+12 and 5d6+30 and 2d8+12) Fort +13, Ref +7, Will +5; evasion

#### OFFENSE

## Spd 40 ft.

Melee +2 greataxe +15/+10 (2d6+9) or +12/+7 spiked chain (2d4+6)

Space 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft. Special Attacks rage 1/day, sneak attack +3d6

#### TACTICS

Before Combat Gartango takes cover around the corner when he detects someone entering the machine room.

During Combat At a distance Gartango employs his ring of the ram against the PCs knocking them into the deadly

stats above). She takes cover around the corner, peering out to cast spells at the advancing party.

During Combat Brekka casts confusion on a PC in the first round and then uses suggestion to force a PC to bull rush another one out of the way of "danger" (but actually forcing both to move through the hazardous gears and pistons). She pelts advancing fighters with Empowered rays of enfeeblement. She uses hold monster and hideous laughter against foes engaging Gartango (allowing him to sneak attack them). Brekka does not engage in melee combat ever, rather she always 5 foot steps and casts spells.

Morale Brekka fights to the death.

#### STATISTICS

- Str 8, Dex 18, Con 15, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 18 Base Atk +4; Grp +3
- Feats Dodge, Empower Spell, Greater Spell Focus (enchantment), Spell Focus (enchantment)
- Skills Bluff +13, Concentration +10, Knowledge (arcana) +5, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +5, Spellcraft +6
- SQ summon familiar
- Combat Gear wand of cat's grace (12 charges remaining), red robes and sandals, +4 periapt of health.

gears (treat as an extra encounter with the machine hazard). Once the PCs close, the gnoll moves to block them from engaging his mistress and deals punishing Power Attacks (5 points) against his enemies. If he has trouble hitting he relents with the Power Attack and bull rushes them into things.

Morale Gartango fights to the death.

#### **STATISTICS**

- Str 22, Dex 16, Con 22, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8 Base Atk +6; Grp +12
- Feats Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greataxe)
- Skills Climb +7, Jump +7, Listen +5, Spot +5, Tumble +11
- SQ fast movement, trapfinding, trap sense +2

Combat Gear ring of the ram (20 charges), potion of cure serious wounds Other Gear +1 hide armor, +2 greataxe, +4 amulet of natural armor, red robes.

# 46. Clock Mechanism Room (EL 8)

Small pendulums swing to and fro through this chamber and pistons work in perfect rhythm. Thick viscous black grease coats all the mechanisms here slurping about. The pistons and ramrods plunge up and down. A compact iron stair winds up into shadow where the sound of more gears churning echoes.

These mechanisms control the clock tower above, keeping near perfect time.

Creature: The grease coating these mechanisms is black oil, but behind the whirling pistons are several long lubricant silos. Most contain hundreds of gallons of grease, dispensing it automatically to keep the clockwork machines from wearing out.

One of these silos is made of stone, and a black pudding lives within. When Armand (in area 47) detects intruders on the stairs, he pulls a lever, and the silo grinds open. The black pudding flows out into the Clock Mechanism Room, sizzling away the steel machines and causing the pistons and ramrods to slip from their moorings and explode into shrapnel.

Explosion: Everyone in the area takes 5d6 slashing damage (including the pudding), and then the hungry ooze sludges towards the PCs and envelops them.

Black Pudding: hp 115, see MM page 201.

Development: Once the pudding eats away the staircase, a DC 15 Climb check is necessary to ascend this shaft to area 47 above.

#### 47. Tower Chamber (EL 5)

This cramped metal room is hot and dank. Steam and smoke billow here and several thin metal gears, interlocking ornately, lay overtop one another on the wall.

The gears stopped due to the release of the ooze below. A window-like hole in the gnashing metal gears has space for a Medium sized person to squeeze through. Touching the mechanism while passing through (Dex check or Escape Artist DC 15 to avoid) results in the gears falling over onto anyone standing in the area. This delivers 3d6 damage and pins them (equivalent to a grapple with Str 25).



# Brekka and Bartango Attack

## 48. Armand's Redoubt (EL 13)

This long cylindrical chamber is lined with the metal teeth of gears kaleidescoping and whirling about. Beyond these spinning steel maws lies a small workshop filled with alchemical works, steam venting mechanisms, a shrieking centrifuge, and a wild array of tubing and metal instruments.

Blood is everywhere, soaking the walls and staining every implement and surface beyond, giving the workshop the appearance of a ruptured heart. A gore spattered canvas sheet hangs in one corner, an ominous vaguely feminine shape undulating beyond. On the far side of the workshop the glass face of a clock spins madly, no longer telling time, but rather running out of it.

**Creatures:** At long last the PCs face Armand, but he is no longer the man they met earlier. The alchemist steps forward from the shadows of the workshop's interior barechested, his torso punctured with large metal nozzles and huge dagger-like needles. Tubing attached to these implements trails off him, running below the sheet. Thick blood flows from the Mother of Gorgons shackled to the wall beyond, pulsing into Armand's veins.



Armand is much changed. The raw power of the gorgon's blood swells within him, and his muscles now ripple with an unnatural life of their own. His skin has taken on a stony sheen, and many of his capillaries have ruptured, oozing thick blood down his arms and back. His eyes are pure madness, whirling with a brooding demon's hate. Armand is a nightmare made flesh, and bent on evil.

The Mother of Gorgons is here as well, but she is badly weakened. Her strength has been sapped by constant blood drain both to fuel the creation of gallons of *blood elixir* and to transform Armand. The sheet over her keeps her gaze from affecting anyone in the room, but as soon as Armand pulls it down, the party is subject to her baleful eye.

# - Sodine into UBlood -

## Armand,

# The Blood-Infused

- CE male human (blood infused) barbarian 2/ rogue 7
- Medium humanoid
- Init +7; Senses Listen +9, Spot +11
- Languages Abyssal, Common, Celestial, Draconic, Elven, Infernal

#### DEFENSE

- AC 24, touch 16, flat-footed 18; improved uncanny dodge
- (+8 natural, +2 Dex, +3 cufflinks of deflection) hp 135 (2d12+18 and 7d6+63)
- Fort +14, Ref +11, Will +10; dual mind, evasion, immutable

# OFFENSE

#### On L 40 (

- Spd 40 ft.
- Melee 2 slams +22 (1d6+15) and blood drinking tongue +17 (1d6+15 and 1d4 Con)
- Ranged mwk fold-out clockwork crossbow +14/+9 (1d8) or +14/+9 ranged touch (syringe bolts)
- Special Attacks alchemical bolts, rage 1/ day, sneak attack +4d6

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat Armand dispenses with petty potions and what he now calls "base alchemy." He prepares for the battle in no special way save to pull the sheet down to reveal the writhing Mother of Gorgons beyond.
- During Combat Armand savors his newfound power, wading into melee and employing brutal slams against his foes and using Power Attack with abandon (all 7 points of his base attack on every attack).
- Morale Armand, gripped in the blood rage of the Gorgon, fights to the death.

## **S**TATISTICS

- Str 31, Dex 22, Con 29, Int 13, Wis 18, Cha 17 Base Atk +7; Grp +12
- Feats Alchemical Mastery, Combat Expertise, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Finesse, Weapon Focus (sword cane)
- Skills Bluff +12, Balance +13, Climb +17, Craft (alchemy) +17, Craft (clockwork mechanism) +17, Decipher Script +15, Diplomacy +17, Disable Device +15, Disguise +10, Escape Artist +13, Gather Information +10, Heal +11, Hide +13, Intimidate +15, Jump +17, Knowledge (arcana) +17, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +15, Knowledge (local) +10, Listen +9,

## CR 12

Move Silently +13, Search +8, Sense Motive +11, Spellcraft +17 (+19 decipher scrolls), Spot +11, Swim +12, Use Magic Device +17 (+21 scrolls), Use Rope +9

- SQ dominant personality, dual mind, fast movement, ferocity, trapfinding, trap sense +2, blood sense, blood drain
- Dominant Personality (Ex) Armand is the dominant personality inhabiting the body he shares with Silas. When he is control he draws upon Silas' training and skills with ease, absorbing Silas' learned gifts and using them as his own. Armand has access to all of Silas' skills and feats, and even uses his skills as if his stats were Silas' at that time. All of these skills and feats are listed above.
- Dual Mind (Ex) Armand has two psyches at his disposal. Whenever he is targeted with a mind-affecting effect and fails his saving throw, he can force it on Silas, effectively negating it. Armand is also adept at fooling those who cast such spells or effects on them, making a Bluff check against their Sense Motive to appear as though he has fallen under their spell. His dual mind also allows him to fool divination effects as if he were Silas.
- Ferocity (Ex) Armand fights without penalty until reduced to -10 hit points at which point he bursts, splattering nearby enemies with gore and bits of ruptured organs.
- Immutable (Su) With the Gorgon's Blood flowing through his veins, Armand's body cannot be altered or transformed in any way. He becomes completely immune to transmutation effects and spells.
- **Combat Gear** 2 *hold person* syringe bolts, 2 *acid arrow* syringe bolts, 1 *ray of exhaustion* syringe bolt, 1 *inflict critical wounds syringe* bolt, 1 poison syringe bolt, syringe with tonic of *haste* and *cat's grace*, syringe with *potion of cure serious wounds*, scroll of *dimension door*, 10 bolts, 5 silver bolts;
- Other Gear masterwork fold out clockwork crossbow, +3 cufflinks of deflection, fine attire, hat, soft leather boots, lambskin chemist's gloves (4 sets), monocle examination lens, masterwork alchemist's kit and masterwork clockwork tools in a bag of holding, clockwork tools in a bag of holding, clockwork pocket watch that chimes a children's tune (for some reason this pocket watch plays dissonantly off tune when Armand opens it).

#### Mother of Gorgons: hp 150, see Appendix A.

Development: On the fifth round of combat, the Mother of Gorgons surges against her shackles and snaps free. The ire in her venomous heart over being kept captive for weeks is unimaginable. She unleashes her fury on the PCs and Armand alike, choosing a new target every round for her wrath.

If the PCs employ a syringe of antidote against Armand, the effect is devastating. The gorgon's blood within him bursts free of his veins. Armand suffers 10d6 damage for every dose of antidote employed against him as his arteries rupture and blood sprays from his skin in great geysers. He is also stunned for one round each time he is injected with a dose of the antidote.

If he is hit with any doses of the antidote, he loses his Ferocity ability and at 10 or fewer hit points he regresses into his normal form (see Chapter Two). At this point he collapses and feigns confusion, as if he has no idea what has happened to him. The mask of Silas emerges again, and he thanks the PCs for saving him from his beastly fate.

Silas is disoriented and his memories of the past few weeks are fragmented. He knows his "brother" Armand was able to seize control, but believes he did so only because he started experimenting with the blood elixir on himself (not true, Armand simply gained the upper hand when Silas became obsessed with discovering the secrets of the blood). Silas believes wholeheartedly that now that the blood is completely out of his system (thanks to the antidote), Armand is gone. Silas knows he is very sick though, and should be locked away for a time to recover his wits, somewhere he can do no further harm in case Armand should return. He surrenders to the PCs without further resistance.

Sadly Silas is not real. He is just a figment of Armand's twisted psyche employed in just such a situation as this defeat, and for one purpose alone – to save him from facing justice for his vile acts. Somewhere deep in Silas' mind Armand laughs with evil glee if the PCs accept his surrender. As long as Silas lives so too does Armand, and the evil persona schemes behind his mask until he can avenge himself upon the PCs.

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# Mother of Gorgons

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# Concluding the Adventure

f the PCs triumph over Armand and destroy his shipment of tainted wine, they have saved Zobeck from madness and a deluge of blood. Whether or not anyone in the city believes their wild tale about a kindly alchemist transformed by a mythical beast's blood is another matter entirely. If the party gathered enough evidence of Armand's involvement in the Bloody Murders they can clear themselves of any wrong doing and avoid prosecution.

Here are some suggestions for the aftermath of **Blood of the Gorgon**. The PCs may become embroiled in the deviltry and malfeasance of the Cloven Nine, or they may find themselves fugitives blamed for murders committed by their own blood doubles, or perhaps targeted by the powerful merchant families whose members were among the cultists of the Red Goddess. Those family members were most likely were slaughtered by the PCs in their raid against the cult's undercity stronghold, and the recovered corpses may have been subject to *speak with dead* spells to identify their killers. This evidence may show the party in a poor light.

If Armand was not killed, but rather surrendered as Silas, you have a potent archnemesis waiting in the wings as well. Perhaps while he is convalescing in an asylum somewhere, the pit fiend Malkus-Zeer may take a greater interest in the evil alchemist, granting him infernal power far exceeding what he was so desperately pursuing. Certainly, if he lives, and his plans were foiled by the PCs, the heroes have not seen the last of Silas Armand.

# Monsters

The terrors of Zobeck are not found solely in the Crossroads City.

# **Blood Hag**



bent-backed crone, with long leathery arms ending in cruel flesh-shearing taloned hands, lurches out of the darkness. Her face is a misshapen mass of leathery flesh punctuated with a bulbous nose like a gnarled knot on an old oak tree. Her massive brow overhangs deep black lusterless eyes. The crone's hair is

a wriggling mass of red worms, hissing and mewling as they dribble blood down her ugly face.

## **Blood Hag**

**CR 9** 

CE Medium monstrous humanoid Init +3; Senses blood sense 90 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +9, Spot +9

#### DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 13, flat-footed 21 (+11 natural armor, +3 Dex) hp 102 (12d8+48) Fort +8, Ref +11, Will +15 DR 10/magic SR 22

# OFFENSE

Spd 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

- Melee blood drinking hair +17 (1d8+5 and blood drain) and
- 2 claws +15 (1d6+5)
- Space 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft. (10 ft. with blood drinking hair)
- Special Attacks blood drain, call the blood, face peel, spell-like abilities

#### Spell-like Abilities (CL 12th)

- At will-deathwatch, death knell (DC 16), disguise self, ghost sound, invisibility, knock, pass without trace, protection from good, tongues, ventriloquism (DC 14), water breathing
- 3/day-quickened bestow curse (DC 19), mirror image, empowered vampiric touch (DC 17)
- 1/day-modify memory (DC 17), cloudkill (DC 18)

## TACTICS

Before Combat Blood hags are masterful stalkers and hunters. Once they find prey that strikes their fancy, they stalk them in various disguises, and creep their halls by night, striking in the dead hours before dawn. They favor chicanery such





as invisibility, disguise self, pass without trace, ghost sound and the like to befuddle foes. If seriously threatened or stalking particularly dangerous prey, the hag employs protection from good and mirror image as well.

- During Combat A blood hag faced with deadly foes usually seeks escape, unless confronted in her lair, at which point she battles to the death. She first unleashes cloudkill upon her enemies, and then hurls quickened bestow curses to dire effect. She employs Call the Blood to rend their veins and bleed them dry. If wounded, she draws close to make use of empowered vampiric touch and her blood drinking hair.
- Morale Blood hags flee if they can, preferring to stalk rather than fight. If forced into battle in their lair, they fight to the bitter end.

## **STATISTICS**

Str 20, Dex 16, Con 18, Int 19, Wis 21, Cha 16 Base Atk +12; Grp +17



Feats Empower Spell-like Ability (vampiric touch), Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Quicken Spell-like Ability (bestow curse) Skills Bluff +13, Climb +15,

Concentration +14, Diplomacy +12, Disguise +15 (+17 acting), Hide +9, Intimidate +11, Jump +9, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Listen +9, Move Silently +13, Sense Motive +11, Spellcraft +11, Spot +9 Languages Abyssal, Common, Giant, Sylvan SQ blood sense

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

- Blood Drain (Ex): A blood hag's hair is a morass of disgusting worms ever thirsty for fresh blood. Any foe struck suffers them burrowing into their flesh and drinking deep, inflicting 1d4 Con damage. A blood hag heals 5 hit points every time they drain Con from a foe.
- Blood Sense (Su): A blood hag can detect the blood of a living creature within 90 ft. and pinpoint their location within 30 ft.
- Call the Blood (Su): A blood hag may target a living creature within 60 ft. that she detects with her blood sense (she need not have line of sight), and makes them bleed uncontrollably. A DC 19 Will save negates this ability, and anyone making their save cannot be affected by that blood hag's Call the Blood ability again for 24 hours (the save DC is Charisma based). The hag may choose any of the following effects:
  - · Blood Eye: The victim's eyes well with blood and crimson tears stream down their face. They are blinded as if by blindness/deafness for 1 minute.
  - · Heart like Thunder: The only sound the victim hears is the rushing of their own blood in their ears and the thumping of their own heart for 1 min. They are deaf as if by blindness/deafness
  - Rupturing Arteries: The victim suffers 5d6 damage as their veins and arteries suddenly burst open.
  - Blood Choke Curse: The victim's lungs fill with blood and they cannot speak or cast spells with verbal components. They get a second save on the following round or begin to drown on their own blood (receiving a new save every round thereafter until dead).

- Improved Grab (Su): A blood hag that strikes any foe of Medium size or smaller with its blood drinking hair or both claw attacks can immediately initiate a grapple as a free action. The hag automatically drains blood from a grappled foe.
- Blood Drain (Ex): A blood hag's hair is a morass of disgusting worms ever thirsty for fresh blood. Any foe struck suffers them burrowing into their flesh and drinking deep, inflicting 1d4 Con damage. A blood hag heals 5 hit points every time they drain Con from a foe.
- Face Peel (Su): A blood hag may peel the face right off a grappled foe. This gruesome act inflicts 2d6+5 damage and dazes the opponent for one round. Thereafter the opponent suffers a 50% spell failure on the casting of any spell requiring verbal components, not to mention suffering abject agony (-4 on attacks, saves and skill checks). Only a *heal* spell restores their stolen features, though curative magic will cause an ugly sheen of scar tissue to form over their skull and sinew (-4 on all Bluff and Diplomacy checks thereafter, +4 on Intimidate checks).

Any face pulled off in this manner animates and bizarrely retains some faint semblance of the former owner's memories and personality (though the face is quite mad with agony). The blood hag may also wear this face to gain a +5 circumstance bonus on any Disguise checks made to imitate the former owner. Blood hags often claim the faces of prey as trophies or fond keepsakes, sometimes weaving several into a gibbering malady (see new monster).

### ECOLOGY

Environment urban, marshlands, or underground Organization solitary or covey Treasure standard Alignment always chaotic evil Advancement by class level Level Adjustment —

Blood hags have long skulked on the fringes of society. Rumor has it the first were born when a green hag named Salgra fell in love with a mad vampire archmage named Tzal-Salah. The two fell deeply and wildly in love and their passion rivaled any great lovers of antiquity. Tzal-Salah ruled a small kingdom of undead servitors and living slaves, a land north and east of Zobeck. He and his queen seemed to have everything, but they lacked what they wanted most – a child of their own making. Tzal-Salah plumbed the depths of the darkest necromantic lore and engaged in blasphemous rituals with his hag bride. After a hundred years, she finally swelled with their abominable get.

Thus the first blood hag was born. A living thing, but cursed with its father's thirst for blood. Since this time the hags have spread through the world, eventually gaining the ability to give birth to their own children by mating with mortals.

Now the hags prey on mankind, stealing their seed to propagate, their blood to satisfy their insatiate thirst, and their faces as trophies of these short- lived and bloody trysts.

# Bloody Creature Template

rmand's dread alchemical nightmare is a terrible concoction capable of warping those who imbibe it or have it introduced into their blood stream. The potent *blood elixir* requires a DC 25 Fortitude save to shake off. It is also insidious, as the infected person does not notice it take root in their system. Anyone of good or neutral alignment produces a Bloody creature, while evil creatures simply become one.

Those unfortunate good or neutrally aligned creatures that come in contact with the *blood elixir* surrender a portion of their soul to its malignant power. When they sleep, the elixir roils inside them, claiming a large portion of the victim's blood as the sustenance it needs to take a dreaded humanoid form. This aberration bleeds free of the host through their pores, eyes, mouth and ears, trickling off to slowly congeal into a dreaded bloody version of the host's body, though greatly enhanced by the elixir. The victim suffers 4 Con damage when the bloody creature first emerges. They regain the lost Con normally thereafter.

Once this body takes humanoid form, it may persist on its own, drawing fresh blood from victims who cross its path in order to sustain it. Still, the connection to its host remains ever present. The Bloody creature is imbued with all the host's thoughts, memories, dreams, nightmares and it is ruled by the host's darkest unspoken desires and malevolent urges buried deep in its mind. The Bloody creature acts on these dire impulses and wantonly indulges itself in every forbidden desire harbored by the host.

An evil creature infected with *blood elixir* simply bonds with the *elixir* and gains the Bloody template. They are host and abomination made one.

Humanoid subjects infected with the *blood elixir* (either through imbibing it or being injected by it) give rise to Bloody creatures. It is possible for other creatures to be infected as well, though the type of creature capable of producing a blood double is left up to the GM's discretion.

## **Bloody Creature**

- Size and Type: The creature's size remains the same, but its type changes to monstrous humanoid. Its class hit dice and skills remain unaffected by this change. The creature merely gains all of the traits of a monstrous humanoid.
- Speed: The creature's speed remains unchanged.
- Armor Class: The creature gains a +6 natural armor bonus to its AC.
- Attacks and Damage: The creature retains any attacks (natural or weapon proficiencies), and gains two claw attacks (1d6 damage for a medium creature) and a blood drinking tongue. This thick length of disgusting sinew droops sickeningly from the creature's mouth, pulsing and slithering with a life of its own. The tongue ends in several cruel spasming barbs surrounding a quivering sphincter that sucks blood from wounded foes at an alarming rate (see Special Attacks).
- Special Attacks: The Bloody creature retains any of the host's special attacks, and also gains the ability to drain a victim's blood when attacking with its blood drinking tongue. The tongue drains 1 point of Con damage every time it strikes, and the Bloody creature gains 5 temporary hit points for every point of Con it drains.
- Spells: Any creature born out of a spellcaster also casts spells, but they may choose to switch out any spells or Domains as they please.
- **Special Qualities:** *Blood Sense (Su):* Every Bloody creature has the ability to sense the blood of living foes within 60 feet.
- Abilities: Adjust a Bloody creature's abilities as follows: Str +8, Dex +4, Con +8.
- Skills: A Bloody creature retains the base creature's skills, though their enhancements to abilities add to these skills' bonuses accordingly.
- Challenge Rating: +2 Alignment: A Bloody creature's alignment is always chaotic evil.

# - Monsters -

# Gibbering Malady

his giant squelching sack of sewn together human faces writhes on the floor. The jumbling mass of mouths, eye-holes and flaccid noses flops disgustingly towards you, the toothless mouths jerking freakishly and fleshy eye holes squinting as if desperately trying to see.

## **Gibbering Malady**

## **CR 8**

CE Medium aberration Init +3; Senses blood sense 90 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +9, Spot +9

#### DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 18 (+8 natural armor, +3 Dex) hp 93 (12d8+36) Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +12 DR 5/bludgeoning Immune acid

#### OFFENSE

**Spd** 30 ft., climb 30 ft., swim 30 ft. **Melee** 5 bites +14 (1d6+5 and blood drain) **Space** 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft.

Special Attacks blood drain, engulf, gibbering chorus, improved grab, face peel, spew

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat The gibbering malady hides and if possible waits until it can spring among its foes.
- During Combat A gibbering malady immediately begins blathering its sanityshredding chorus of tortured moans when it spots a foe. If possible, the malady moves amidst the enemy and spews acids and bones at them. Otherwise it bites and tries to engulf a foe.

Morale Gibbering maladies do not flee.

#### STATISTICS

Str 20, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 12 Base Atk +9; Grp +18

- Feats Alertness, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Weapon Focus (bite)
- Skills Hide +8, Jump +10, Listen +24, Spot +24

Languages All

SQ all-seeing, amorphous

## SPECIAL ABILITIES

- All-Seeing (Ex): A gibbering malady's fleshy form is riddled with empty eyes that see regardless of the face, and its dozens of shriveled flopping ears hear as well as any creatures. A malady gains +10 to all Spot and Listen checks.
- Amorphous (Ex): A gibbering malady's anatomy is bizarre. They are immune to critical hits and cannot be flanked.
- Blood Drain (Ex): A gibbering malady's bite attack drains a foe of blood. The malady

drinks deep inflicting 1 Con damage per bite. A malady heals 5 hit points for every 1 Con it drains.

- Blood Sense (Su): A gibbering malady can detect the blood of a living creature within 90 ft. and pinpoint their location within 30 ft.
- Engulf (Ex): A gibbering malady can engulf any grappled opponent or any opponent hit by three or more bites. The opponent must succeed on a DC 21 Reflex save or be pulled into the malady's space and enveloped. Once engulfed, a foe suffers 4d6 acid damage per round and suffers 1d4 Con damage as well. An engulfed foe is also subject to the gibbering malady's face peel ability. Any foe killed inside a malady has their flesh completely boiled from their bones, which it spews out at their allies.
- Improved Grab (Su): A gibbering malady that strikes one foe of Medium size or smaller with three or more of its bites can immediately initiate a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity. A grappled foe is automatically engulfed (see above).
- Face Peel (Su): A gibbering malady may peel the face right off a grappled foe, or any target struck by two bite attacks in a single round. This gruesome act inflicts 2d6+5 damage and dazes the opponent for one round.

Thereafter the opponent suffers a 50% spell failure on the casting of any spell requiring verbal components, not to mention suffering abject agony (-4 on attacks, saves and skill checks). Only a heal spell restores their stolen features, though curative magic will cause an ugly sheen of scar tissue to form over their skull

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and sinew (-4 on all Bluff and Diplomacy checks thereafter, +4 on Intimidate checks). Any face pulled off in this manner animates and bizarrely retains some faint semblance of the former owner's memories and personality (though the face is quite mad with agony). It is then added to the malady's gibbering chorus.

- Gibbering Chorus (Su): The freakish animated faces that make up a malady's form constantly howl, gibber, mewl, and moan in abject horror. Anyone within 60 feet off the malady is affected by a *confusion* effect (DC 17 Will save negates). This is a sonic mind-affecting compulsion. If the malady bears the face of anyone the target recognizes, in addition to suffering the confusion effect they also suffer 1d6 Wisdom drain as the face calls out madly to them.
- Spew (Ex): A gibbering malady is filled with disgusting digestive acids. As a full round action it can spew this acid out of its mouths and eye holes blasting all creatures within a 10 feet radius. Anyone in the area of effect suffers 2d6 acid damage (Ref save DC 17 halves).
  - Additionally, if the malady has killed an engulfed foe in the last 1d4 rounds it also spews out their skull and bones inflicting an additional 2d6 bludgeoning damage (the Reflex save halves this).

### ECOLOGY

Environment urban, marshlands, or underground

# Organization solitary

- Treasure standard
- Alignment always chaotic evil Advancement 13 – 15 HD (Medium) 16 – 24 HD (Large)
- Level Adjustment -



Gibbering maladies are nightmares made rolling rivers of distorted feature. The origin of these nightmares remains a mystery. Their likeness to common gibbering mouthers have led many sages to claim they are some sort of advanced abominable version of these lesser aberrations. Others believe gibbering mouthers are degenerate offspring of these decidedly foul monsters. Whatever the genealogy, they are no doubt related.

Gibbering maladies crave the faces of humanoid foes, though they occasionally steal the faces of giantkin as well. They are not unintelligent, and speak the languages of every foe whose face they steal, but they rarely choose to communicate. They make exceptions for other creatures obsessed with stealing and collecting faces (such as blood hags).

The faces stolen from living beings somehow retain a semblance of their original owner's personality. In some cases these emotions or pulses of instinct can take control of the entire gibbering malady and force it to follow through with some action that the original bearer of the face left undone.

# Mother of Gorgons

This massive woman appears bloated with blood, her huge sagging breasts riddled with varicose veins and near bursting, her distended torso alive with an ocean of vitae. The woman's pelvis disappears into a twisting sinewy anaconda's body. The gigantic woman's entire form is riddled with smaller serpents nesting in folds of veiny fat and hissing ominously. Her hair is a living mass of writing snakes as well, their goldflecked eyes showing a sinister intelligence. Her face is bloated like a drowned woman's and thick black blood wells out of her eyes and constantly dribbles from her cavernous mouth.

#### **Mother Of Gorgons**

CR 10

CE Large monstrous humanoid Init +8; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Listen +8, Spot +8

#### DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 17 (+8 natural armor, +4 Dex, -1 size) hp 150 (12d8+96) Fort +14, Ref +12, Will +11 DR 10/silver and piercing SR 22

DR TO/Silver and piercing SR 22

# OFFENSE

**Spd** 30 ft., climb 20 ft. **Melee** slam +16 (1d6+5 and blood) and 4 snakes +14 (1d6+5 and blood) **Space** 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks blood of the gorgon, improved grab, petrifying gaze

#### TACTICS

- Before Combat The Mother of Gorgons chooses terrain suited to her natural advantages if she can, seeking places where enemies must funnel towards her (making it difficult to avoid her gaze).
- During Combat The Mother relies on her gaze at a distance. If this proves unsuccessful she closes to savages as many foes as possible with her snakes. If her foes seem overwhelmed she simply grapples one and slowly crushes them and fills them with her corrupted blood.
- Morale The Mother of Gorgons lives for the madness of battle and rarely flees a conflict.

#### STATISTICS

Str 21, Dex 18, Con 26, Int 6, Wis 16, Cha 14 Base Atk +12; Grp +21

Feats Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (slam)

Skills Climb +13, Intimidate +7, Listen +8, Spot +8

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#### SPECIAL ABILITIES

Blood of the Gorgon (Su): The Mother's blood is obscenely powerful in its unfiltered form. Anyone bitten by one of her snakes is injected with a prodigious dose; once her blood enters the victim's own veins it corrupts them. The victim must first succeed on a DC 24 Fortitude save or suffer 1d4 Con damage; their body contorts horribly, taking on an awful palsied appearance. Thus deformed a victim suffers -2 to all attacks, saves and skill checks. A target takes 1d4 Con damage every time they are bitten by a snake, but the debilitating deformity does not stack (they only suffer a -2 no matter how many times they are bitten). A remove curse, heal or like effect is necessary to reverse the deformity.

Whether the Fortitude save is successful or not, the victim must also make a DC 18 Will save, or be corrupted by the blood's inherent evil. If the victim fails this save, their alignment temporarily shifts to Chaotic Evil and the victim turns on former friends and foes and attacks them for that round and the following round.

After two rounds of attacks on their friends, the victim receives a second DC 18 Will save. If successful, the alignment is restored—in a physical and direct way. They vomit forth the evil within as a bloody version of themselves (apply the bloody creature template to the PC) and their alignment returns to normal. The PC and the bloody creature are both dazed on the round the bloody creature is vomited up; on the next round it attacks the victim and their compatriots.

If second saving throw fails, the victim attacks friends for another two rounds. At the player's option, the character's alignment may change permanently to Chaotic Evil.

- Host of Snakes (Ex): The writhing snakes riddling the Mother's body defend her from harm. When a Mother suffers a melee or ranged attack, 20% of the time the serpents intercede and are lopped off or skewered in her place (the attack misses). In the case of a melee attack, if the snakes negate the attack they also immediately initiate a disarm attempt against the attacker. If defeated on the opposed test, the Mother of Gorgons loses one of her snake attacks for 1d4 rounds.
- Improved Grab (Ex): The Mother can immediately initiate a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity against any foe of Medium size or smaller hit by one its snake attacks. A grappled foe is automatically bitten every round by one snake attack and affected by the mother's blood of the gorgon ability.

# - Monsters -

Petrifying Gaze (Su): Anyone meeting the Mother's gaze is subject to a petrification curse. Anyone meeting her gaze and failing a DC 21 Fort save is affected as by a *slow* spell. Success means the curse fails to take.

On the second round the victim receives another DC 21 Fort save. If they succeed the *slow* is negated and the curse thrown off. If it fails, the victim gains a -4 penalty to Strength and Dexterity and remains slowed.

The next round they may make another DC 21 Fort save. If they succeed the ability penalties and *slow* effect are negated. If the victim fails this third save they are turned to stone. A *stone to flesh* effect reverses the transformation.

#### ECOLOGY

Environment mountains or underground Organization solitary Treasure standard Alignment always chaotic evil Advancement by class level Level Adjustment —

The Mother of Gorgons is an enigma. No sage knows for certain where she came from, and though a connection between the Mother and common gorgons and medusas seems certain, the exact nature of that connection remains unclear. Some claim the Mother is an abomination, a horrid corruption of a common medusa, polluted by some vile god's pure blood, or the blasphemous whispers of an ancient curse. Others claim medusa are her children, lesser anathema whose evil cannot compare with their dread mother.

The Mother is a legendary figure in alchemical lore, whose blood has unique qualities not found anywhere else in nature. It has the potential to grant an imbiber great power, but its evil influence cannot be denied. She has lived most of her abominable existence fleeing desperate hunters of her blood and seeks remote locales far from eivilization.



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# Thandouts

Ocular proof and eyewitness accounts of Armand's villainy.



Handout 1:
 A Note from Silas

Vol discovered something terrible. The cril force behind the recent rach of marders and the histed abominations born of blood has appeared before me. I fear they demand my alchemical surices to some nefacious purpose. I've flad my apartment and I'm moving from boarding have to boarding house to escape their hunters. Please must me in the alley behind Hatter' Row bright at midnight. I fear for my life, but more importantly if what I know dis with me, all of Ecbeck start in peril. Silas

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# - Thandouts -

Handout 2:

From the Records of Justicar Verdane, High Magistrate of the Free City of Zobeck

# Testimony of the Brewmistress Rosmira, as Sworn before Justicar Verdane

Radomir was not himself for weeks before that night. His usual fair Reallor had surrendered to a positively chalky cast. Day after day he appeared more porcelain, and the children began to tease him. He was listless in mornings and by afternoon his breath came in a wet gurgling wheeze as if he were struggling to keep from drowning. His fingers shrank, receded to thin stubs, like the twiggy branches of our new mulberry tree. His eyes were not his own, yellow craggy lines marring his once shining whites, as if they should be bloodshot, but his blood was in short supply. No healer could restore his vitality, and we paid good coin to more than a dozen of the Golden Goddess's finest.

That night I heard the hideous sounds from his chambers. Wet slourching, like a thirsty dog at his water bowl, punctuated with the occasional piteous, animal moan from Radomir. When I opened the doors, she hunched above him, her taloned feet dug into the headboard, her ragged blood-spattered dress draped over a misshapen, only vaguely feminine form. She snapped her head up at the sound of the latch, and a twisted face glared at me with black pupiless eyes, like wells of starless midnight. Her hair was perhaps her most disgusting feature... thick strands like long worms, wriggling of their own accord and weeping blood down her face, shoulders and back. Her hair mewled, high-pitched, like a basket of hungry kittens, and strained to reach Radomir.

The haggard demon-faced crone stood slowly, and I saw Radomir. His head was a pulpy ruin, his bloody skull gaping up at the monstrous woman above him, his eyes, no flesh around them, rolling madly in their sockets. It was only then that I realized she held his face in one of her red-taloned hands, its toothless mouth working in time with the moans from his bloody skull.

I screamed when she came for me, and that is all I remember before you woke me in the hall.

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# Handout 3: Alchemy Notes

The common mistake made by many foolish seekers of immostality is confusing the Blood of the Gorgon with the sanguineous fluid of a common gorgon- These stony bulls' blood has a certain potency, it is true, most notably the ability to shield items coated with it from certain divinations, but the Blood of the Gorgon referred to in classic texts denotes a far more elusive ingredient-

Many have taken this to mean the blood of a medusa and hundreds of these reclusive menaces have been hunted and beheaded in hopes of attaining life everlasting~ Again, while the blood of a snake-haired queen is a powerful element, it pales in comparison to the might of the Blood of the Gorgon~ The true Blood of the Gorgon, as referred to in the Sanctis Alchemai, is the blood of a strange creature, whose true origin remains a mystery~ Many texts refer to her as the Mother of Gorgons, and perhaps she is the womb from which the more commonplace horrors of gorgons (the common bull variety, or medusa, or some postulate both) are spawned.

This Mother of Gorgons resembles a medusa in many ways, though her body is bloated and her breakts hang grotesquely, like sacs full of roifing liquid. Serpents sprout from her head, but her torso and arms are also writhing nesting grounds of venomous snakes all constantly hungry for human blood. Fier eyes are sunken pits wherein wriggling larvae spawn into great clouds of blood flies. A few fragmented bits of fore claim she mated with a titanic bull and her offspring grew either in his or her own image- fieroes sent against her stabbed her with silver, but none vanguished her.

For blood is the stuff of legends. They say an elixir can be wrought from her blood that Grants everlasting life to those who imbibe it and grants them physical power beyond belief. True as this may be, most of the early sages warn that such infusions, even as they invigorate the drinker's body, are perilous to their soul- The evil that runs in the Mother's veins cannot be burned away, even by the most skilled alchemist. One cannot distill power from the evil that festers in the Blood of the Gorgon without retaining that taint, and any who drink it find their darkest unspoken urges given unnatural life-

till it is rumored by some that the perfect host exists. A man so foul and corrupted with evil that the Blood's malignant properties only bolster him fufther. If such a vile man were to drink an infusion of the Mother's Blood, he might become like a god, and know no equal in dark power. Let us pray these tales are just the cloudspinning musings of bygone sages.

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# Open Bame Airense

# Version 1.0a

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# The Wood Schill Mot Save You

# A Test of Terror for 8th - 9th Level Characters



en always seek the blood of monsters. Some spill it to avenge their massacred families. Others swim through an ocean of gore to find treasures worth the envy of kings. A few know blood can be a priceless treasure in and of itself.

Alchemy has long used the lifeblood of monstrosities as arcane fuel, and of all the legendary beasts, the blood of the gorgon holds the most secrets. Few know the blood's darkest lore—its ability to draw out the monster within every soul. Those who drink gorgon's blood are forever changed, and the darkest horrors of their mind unleashed.

The heroes hunt a deadly murderer who stalks the streets of the Free City of Zobeck after nightfall, and cross blades with a guild of monsters who rule the city from below. Lucky heroes might risk no more than their lives. Unlucky heroes must wager their souls in a game where monsters and men dance close enough to share their blood... and their fate.

Blood of the Gorgon is not for the faint of heart. Nicolas Logue creates a dark urban horror to challenges PCs and players alike. Meet the Mother of Gorgons, foil the mad alchemist, destroy the blood hags and the cult of worshipers seeking pure power and grim salvation.

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