

BLOOD WILL RUN

An Adventure for Novice Characters



The devils watch the mortal world from their infernal realm, always scheming to sink their claws into mortal souls, to turn people from the path of light and virtue to one of darkness and corruption. They tempt, deceive, offer unrivaled treasures and delights, and whisper terrible truths no mortal is meant to know, all to foster the evil they require to gain ownership over the souls, dragging them down into Hell's depths where the souls face an exquisite agony only the devils can create.

Darkness has come to Cheqwood, a mere speck of a town on the edges of an enchanted wood, a place steeped in the old magic of the fey folk that now stands on the precipice of annihilation thanks to the attentions of the devils and their cruel machinations. With beastmen stalking the countryside, ghosts loosed from the Underworld to haunt the lands of the living, children mysteriously vanishing, and a curious stranger named the Bonesmith, the rising tensions might very well cause the hard-won peace of this frontier community to unravel into violence and death.

Blood Will Run is an adventure written for novice characters. In it, the group becomes embroiled in a mystery involving the disappearance of twin boys and the theft of a valuable blade. The deeper the characters investigate, the more horror they uncover until they can drag the true villain into the light.

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BACKGROUND

A few months ago, an elf came to the village of Cheqwood and set up shop on the outskirts of town. If the elf has a name, he's never shared it. Instead, the locals have taken to calling him the Bonesmith for the blades he creates, each one a scrimshaw length of bone and checkered wood, as beautiful as they are dangerous.

The elf's arrival caused quite a stir, since few people in town had ever seen an elf, let alone talked to one. Fascination, however, soon turned to suspicion. The elf had unusual habits, always clad in skin-tight red leathers, with much of his face covered, and kept to himself, having few words for the human inhabitants. The strange faerie acted as if no one else mattered, keeping to himself and rarely offering a word to his neighbors. Now, weeks later, people have come to fear him, and the superstitious folk make signs to ward off evil whenever they pass by his door.

While people were concerned about the odd faerie living in their midst, he never gave them trouble, even if he was standoffish and unfriendly. His demeanor changed one morning when he stormed out of his shop demanding that the townsfolk return what they had stolen. He claimed to have found "irrefutable evidence" that the culprit was a child. Unless the blade is returned to him soon, he vows to find the thief and skin him or her alive.

The next day, Clyde, a pillar in the community, reported his two sons had gone missing and believes the Bonesmith might have followed through with his threat and harmed his boys. As tensions mount, Jex, the village's self-appointed leader, has managed to keep the two men from killing each other, but she fears that unless the missing dagger and children can be found, blood will run through the streets.

WHAT'S REALLY GOING ON

What appears to be a simple dispute between two men in town conceals a much darker predicament. The following facts of the case will be made known to the characters as they explore the community and interact with the locals.

THE BONESMITH

After a horrific tragedy, the Bonesmith left his homeland to find the knowledge and power he needed to exact revenge against those who harmed him. A devil named Marchosias sensed an opportunity to corrupt the elf and, by doing so, spread misery in the mortal world. The devil whispered the secrets of making vile weapons he called *Goreblades* to the elf and directed him to the town of Cheqwood, where he would find the magical wood he needed to create the weapons. The Bonesmith has set up shop in town, gathered the prized wood, and plundered nearby graves for the bones from which he makes the blades.

THE THEFT

A few days before the player characters arrive, Ruf, one of Clyde's now-missing sons, wandered off to play near the Old Ruin, the remains of a house that once belonged to the Sparrow family who ruled these lands long ago. On his way, the boy came upon a neglected graveyard just beyond the Cheqwood Copse and discovered several graves had been disturbed.

His snooping caused the spirit of Kenneth Sparrow to emerge from his headstone. Sensing an opportunity in the frightened boy, it commanded the child to find his bones, threatening that if the boy didn't come back with them by the week's end, the spirit would find the boy and kill everyone in his family.

Fleeing the graveyard, Ruf knew the only person in town with an interest in bones was the stranger. That night, he snuck into the Bonesmith's workshop, grabbed the bone bladed dagger and all the bones he could carry, and made his way back to the graveyard. Before he got there, a band of fomors found him, beat him, and robbed him.

Ruf, bloodied and bruised, headed home, but never made it there (see the Bloody Stump).

THE BEASTMEN

A crazed warg shaman named Kuthuk received a vision from the Void, revealing a weapon of incredible power he could use to gather up a vast horde and lay waste to the Northern Reach. Consulting the entrails of human prisoners he had sacrificed, he determined the prize he sought lay in or around the lands of the faerie forest, Cheqwood. Kuthuk and a band of fomors moved into the Old Ruin to watch for signs of the weapon foretold.

Since settling in the ruins, the beastmen had managed to avoid detection, but a young girl, Amelia, stumbled across the beastmen and was taken prisoner. Her mother, Jex, tracked her to the Old Ruin and there encountered Kuthuk. Rather than kill the girl, the shaman, in a moment of unusual cunning, decided he would hold the girl hostage until they got what they came for. Sending Jex on her way, he swore so long as no one else interfered with the beastmen, Amelia would be safe, but if anyone else came calling, she'd die.

The beastmen happened upon the weapon by chance. While scouting the lands around the woods, the fomors instead found Ruf. After giving the boy a good thrashing, they gathered up the bones and the blade, bringing them all to their master. The night before the characters arrive, Kuthuk left the fomors with their prisoner so he could test the blade's power and gather more minions. He instructed his lackeys to wait for his return.



GETTING STARTED

The adventure centers on the village of Cheqwood and its immediate surroundings. Place the community wherever you want, though it ought to be near one of the hidden kingdoms. The adventure starts when the characters reach Cheqwood at dusk, having traveled there for reasons appropriate to the campaign. Once there, you can draw the characters into the plot in any of the following ways:

- Clyde (see the Sawmill) hears about the newcomers and approaches them to help him find his boys.
- When the characters visit the Bloody Stump, Jex might recruit the characters to locate and return the stolen property to the Bonesmith and stop the dispute.
- Another character you create tells the group about the feud between Clyde and the Bonesmith.
- The characters are tracking a band of beastmen that murdered some people on the road but lost the trail at Cheqwood.

CHEQWOOD

Not far from a forest from which the community takes its name, Cheqwood consists of two dozen buildings, the most important of which are described below. Those not described are homes. All buildings are made from cheqwood, which has an odd checkered pattern when milled. As all the houses are made from this material, every building has a warped appearance.

LOCALS

Half the twenty people living in Cheqwood work as lumberjacks, culling the cheqwood and other trees from the nearby forest and delivering timber to Clyde for milling into planks. The town ships out the lumber to larger communities in the province. People not working as woodcutters have jobs in town, supporting the industry. Everyone except for the Bonesmith is human, with strong ties to the Old Faith, and a tendency toward superstition.

THE BLOODY STUMP

The Bloody Stump operates out of a converted house and barn, offering food, drink, and lodging. Most of the single-story house serves as the tavern with seating for around twenty, while the barn has become a flop house with a rough wood floor installed over the dirt and interior half walls added to create a handful of semi-private rooms. Caravans sometimes stop here as the place has a reputation for clean accommodations and good food.

RUMORS

d6	Rumor
1	No new caravans have come through since the one was attacked on the road last month. (True)
2	Old Mary's dog forgot how to bark and she's sure it has something to do with the shadowy figure she's seen outside her windows at night. (False)
3	There was a big argument in the street out front earlier in the day between the strange elf and Clyde. (True)
4	A passing druid claimed the water here was cursed. (False)
5	Jex's mind is still not right after her daughter went missing a few months back. Jex went out to look for her, but couldn't find her. Some say the spirit haunting the Old Ruin took her. (Partly true)
6	A spirit has been terrorizing the lumberjacks in the Cheqwood Copse. (True)

JEX

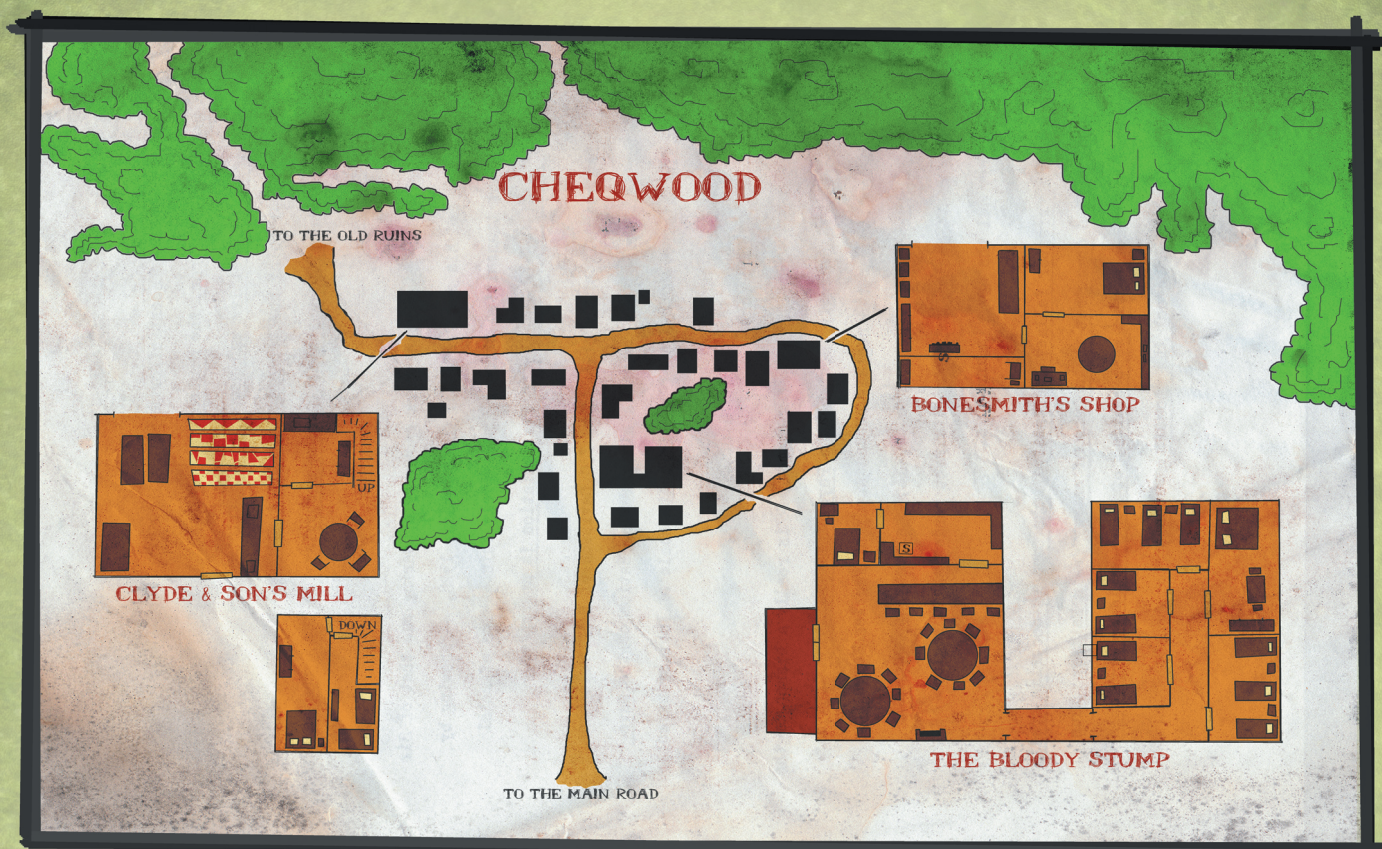
Jex (as a **veteran**) owns The Bloody Stump Tavern & Flop House. A decade ago, she lost her arm just below the shoulder in a woodcutting accident, and retired to open up this establishment. She is a woman of considerable size, strong as an ox, crude as a sailor. She doesn't mince words, and her directness combined with her experience placed her in a position of unofficial authority, with the community looking to her for solutions to their problems.

Information: Jex is a boisterous host, though perceptive characters might notice she over does it a bit.

She can tell the characters about the feud between Clyde and the Bonesmith, though she won't say if the boys are guilty or not. She will come to Clyde's defense, saying he is honest and hardworking, a good man. She's worried about his boys, Ruf and Tuf, saying they vanished from their home. She plays this hard, since she's covering for the fact that she has Ruf locked up in her cellar.

As for the Bonesmith, she doesn't trust him. He's odd, unfriendly, and secretive. Some people claim to have seen him skulking about near the woods at night.

Secrets: Two months ago, Jex's daughter, Amelia, vanished. Jex went looking for her and found her in the Old Ruin, a prisoner of an insane warg shaman named Kuthuk. The beastman told Jex if she does not help keep their presence a secret he will cut off pieces of the girl until there is nothing left to send home. Terrified for her daughter, Jex has kept the secret, while trying to find a way to get the girl back. She spotted Ruf coming home after being roughed up by the fomors and knew that if word got out, the locals would confront the beastmen and her daughter would be as good as dead. She grabbed the boy, slipped him into the cellar, and has held him there until she can figure out how to get her daughter home.



RUF

Jex keeps Ruf locked up in the cellar. The fomor gave him a good beating and broke his leg. The open fracture has become infected, and he's running a high fever. If not treated, he will die in a few days. If rescued, Ruf spills his story.

SAWMILL

The largest building in Cheqwood, the main floor serves as a sawmill, while the upper floor is home to Clyde and his sons.

Exploration: Characters looking around the place might discover one or more of the following clues depending on where they look.

- Two sets of tracks lead from the back porch to The Bonesmith's workshop, one child sized and the other adult sized.
- Three rat carcasses were hidden behind a stack of Cheqwood planks, all have been slit open from tail to throat, their entrails smeared on the floor and wall in chaotic patterns.
- Women's clothing hangs in a closet in Clyde's room. The clothes belonged to Clyde's late wife. Many appear to have been worn recently.

CLYDE

Clyde runs the Sawmill with his twin boys, Ruf and Tuf. He is a serious man, short on words but big on actions. He wears a patch over his left eye and walks with a limp thanks to a mill accident.

Information: Clyde blames the Bonesmith for the disappearance of his boys, and the only reason he hasn't strangled the elf is Jex convinced him to let her handle the matter. His boys are still gone, and he's at his limit. He plans to confront the Bonesmith and beat the truth out of him.

If asked about his boys, Clyde tells the group they both went missing while he was working in the mill. The Bonesmith accused the boys of stealing a dagger, but Clyde knows his boys are innocent.

If asked about any other possible culprits, Clyde thinks for a moment and tells the group that about a month ago fomors attacked a caravan east of the village. Jex was unable to track them very far, despite her extensive experience as a tracker.

BONESMITH'S WORKSHOP

The building's front half is an open-air workshop, with a couple tables, covered in tools, and a few unfinished pieces in wood and bone. The back, accessed by a single door, is set aside for a living space.

PCs investigating the area outside, near a side window that looks into the workshop, find three sets of footprints, one child sized. Two sets (left by fomors) head off to follow a small game trail toward the Old Ruin. The last heads around the back of the building and toward the sawmill. In addition, a set of greasy, child-sized palm prints are smudged near the bottom of the window's glass.

Secret Room: Behind moveable shelves at the back of the workshop stands a secret door. Characters not searching the area might spot a clue to its existence by getting a success on a Perception challenge roll with 1 bane, revealing a few droplets of blood or a stink in the air near the storage rack.

The door opens onto a grisly chamber that reeks of blood and feces. In a large bronze chair along one wall sits Tuf's corpse, restrained by heavy leather straps around the neck, wrists, and ankles. His femurs and ribcage were removed and left on the floor in a heap. Characters that see this must get a success on a Will challenge roll with 1 bane or gain 1 Insanity.

A small table stands next to the chair holding bloodstained bronze tools—hooks, saws, a hammer, and other, less identifiable implements. Against the back wall, hanging on pegs, are a dozen rune-encrusted woodworking tools. Scholars of magic or the occult recognize the symbols as belonging to the Forbidden tradition of magic.

THE BONESMITH

The Bonesmith is tall and thin, with wispy sage-colored hair. He wears traditional leathers unworthy of note save they are dyed a ghastly blood red, an effect made all the more unsettling by his habit of keeping his face mostly covered.

Unfriendly and guarded, he's reluctant to speak with the player characters. If they convince him to talk, he blames local children for the theft of his dagger and unworked bones. The footprints outside the shop and handprints he found on the side window are all the proof he needs. He's had his fill of the village. Once he gets his dagger back, he intends to move to a new village.

Secrets: The Bonesmith has come under the influence of a nasty devil named Marchosias, who preyed on his grief after losing his one true love, and taught him the secrets of crafting *Goreblades*, weapons of corrupting power. Believing the devil will one day grant him the knowledge he needs to destroy his enemies, the elf has traveled widely, creating these tainted weapons and bestowing them to the people who can do the most harm with them. The Bonesmith planned to give the dagger to Jex, though she does not know this, since she's the unofficial leader in the community. Once he hands off the dagger to her, the Bonesmith will move off to infect another town with his weapons.

The loss of the dagger has delayed his plan and, he believes, reduced his standing with his infernal patron. For this reason, the Bonesmith charmed Clyde's son Tuf, lured him to his secret ritual chamber, and killed him.



THE BONESMITH

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 1 faerie

Perception 13 (+3); shadowsight

Defense 14 (soft leather); **Health** 40 (see Masochism),

11 **Insanity**, 4 **Corruption**

Strength 10 (+0), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 12 (+2), **Will** 12 (+2)

Speed 12

Immune damage from disease; charmed, diseased

Spell Defense The Bonesmith takes half damage from spells and makes any challenge roll to resist a spell with 1 boon. A creature attacking the Bonesmith with a spell makes the attack roll with 1 bane.

Masochism When the Bonesmith takes damage, he makes attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 boon, and his weapon attacks deal 1d6 extra damage for 1 round.

Iron Vulnerability The Bonesmith is impaired while in contact with iron. In addition, if the Bonesmith touches or is touched by an object made from iron, he loses Spell Defense for as long as he remains in contact with the object and for 1 minute afterward.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Goreblade (melee) +3 with 1 boon (2d6 plus Steal Soul)

Steal Soul When damage from a *Goreblade* attack causes a creature to become incapacitated, the creature dies, its soul goes to Hell, and the Bonesmith gains 1 Corruption.

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Double Attack The Bonesmith attacks twice with his *Goreblade*.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Countless Doors The Bonesmith can use a triggered action at any time to teleport to an open space he can see within medium range. Once he takes this action, he cannot do so again for 1 minute.

MAGIC

Power 1

Enchantment *bewitch* (2), *charm* (1)

GOREBLADES

Marchosias, a member of the infernal aristocracy, taught the Bonesmith the secret of making daggers, swords, and other bladed weapons from the bones of humans and how to imbue those weapons with devilish power. When the Bonesmith fashions a *Goreblade*, he works a thread of the devil's essence into the bone, essence that's dimly aware and drives anyone carrying the weapon to perform depraved acts of violence.

A creature that picks up a *Goreblade* must get a success on a Will challenge roll or become cursed. The creature remains cursed until the weapon is destroyed, though magic can remove the curse as if it were a rank 4 spell. While cursed, the creature cannot harm the weapon and suffers horrible nightmares that eventually slither into its waking moments, such as seeing horrid visages peering out from shadows, blood dribbling down walls, and bizarre aberrations in its own flesh that grow so foul the creature feels compelled to cut them out. The result of these visions is that the wielder gains 1d3 Insanity at the end of each week it remains cursed. If the creature goes mad from gaining Insanity this way, it immediately takes its own life... falling to Hell and its master.

Despite the risks, a *Goreblade* is a potent weapon. The weapon grants 1 boon on attack rolls and attacks with it deal 1d6 extra damage. In addition, a creature incapacitated by damage dealt by the weapon dies, and the weapon's wielder gains 1 Corruption.



CHEQWOOD COPSE

The copse of trees is of a species found only in this region and spreads across a tightly packed five acres surrounded by a larger wood of mixed species. The cheqwood trees, black bark and blood red leaves, take their unusual nature from lingering fey magic. More importantly, the magic speeds their growth, such that it only takes a few years for a sapling to mature. The wood of the Cheqwood tree, when cut and milled correctly, produces a wood plank that has an alabaster and blood red pattern. The pattern is not always the same, it could be checkers, diamonds, waves, or something less uniform that looks melted or twisted.

THE GRAVEYARD

The wilderness has all but reclaimed the old Sparrow family graveyard. Inside the twisted, rusted iron fence surrounding the place, a few crooked headstones

stab up from thick weeds and brambles, the names on each nearly washed away by the elements. Since no one goes here anymore, the Bonesmith has had no trouble harvesting the materials he needed to make his vile weapons. However, his excavations angered the spirit of Kenneth Sparrow and drew him out from the Underworld to haunt the site as a **phantom**.

The spirit is hostile but could be reasoned with if the player characters bring an offering of fresh blood or something else you decide the phantom might value. If the characters can get Sparrow to talk, he reveals he caught a glimpse of a thin man, dressed in red, sneaking away with a bundle of bones under each arm but was unable to stop him because he had only just returned to the mortal world. The spirit admits to threatening the boy to coerce him into retrieving the stolen bones, though it makes no apologies. If the group returns the bones to the grave within three days, the phantom dissipates, and the spirit returns to the Underworld. Otherwise, it lingers in the world, bound there by its hate for the living.

THE OLD RUIN

Only a few walls and bit of roof remain of the old house that once belonged to the Sparrow family. Leaves and detritus litter the interior. The place is now home to a band of **10 fomors**. The creatures come and go as they please. During the day, four stand guard in area 3, protecting their sleeping fellows in area 4. At night, one stands guard, four sleep in area 4, and the rest roam the countryside, causing trouble, stealing, and spying on the villagers.

The fomors are loyal to Kuthuk and they fight to the death to prevent anyone from plundering their lair. Captured fomors might reveal what Kuthuk intends if tortured or coerced with magic. Kuthuk plans to use the *Goreblade* to kill the warlord of the Bloodraiders, a vicious group of anubins roaming the Desolation in the hopes of taking over the band and adding their numbers to his warriors.

1. Ruins: Broken stones can be seen among the weeds and thistles choking the ground. The area of ruins count as difficult terrain. The growth also conceals the secret entrance (area 2), which imposes 1 bane on Perception challenge rolls made to spot it.

2. Trapped Entrance: A wooden plank, painted to look like moss-covered rocks, covers the entrance to the basement. Any creature stepping onto the plank triggers the trap, which sends spikes up to pierce the foot that triggered it. The creature must get a success on an Agility challenge roll or take 1d6 damage and become slowed for 1 minute or until it heals any damage.





Below the plank is a hole through which can be seen the basement (area 3). A rickety ladder descends to the bottom.

3. The Basement: This room reeks of excrement, urine, and smoke. Crude graffiti depicting a wolf-headed man having his way with all manner of people and creatures covers the walls. A small tunnel pierces the south wall and a full-sized wooden door stands in the center of the east wall.

4. Dugout Room: This tiny chamber has been dug out of the earth. It is 3 yards wide and the ceiling is 2 yards high. Makeshift cots, bedrolls, furs, and the like cover the entire floor.

5. Kuthuk's Room: The door to this room opens to reveal a 3-yard-square room containing a stack of scrap Cheqwood covered in a few dirty blankets. A large wooden cage hangs from the ceiling that holds Jex's daughter, Amelia. She's young and thin from hunger. The shaman stuffed a rag in her mouth and tied her wrists and ankles. Webs heavily obscure the ceiling and the 2 large spiders, Kuthuk's pets, that lurk there.

Searching the room turns up 3 gc, 18 ss, and 17 cp, and 30 bits. One of the copper pennies has a star-shaped hole in the center and is, in fact, an enchanted object that vibrates whenever a devil is within 100 yards of it.

