

GOTTHEIT

by Douglas Sun

The surrounding darkness makes it difficult to see more than a few yards in front of you. Mist billows around you, chilling your armor and your bones. Your road map shows that a traveller's rest is coming. Just a few more miles and you'll be there.

A silhouette looms ahead, the shapes of a village wall and inner buildings draw you closer. You are almost there.

But there are no lights. Nothing to guide you. The quiet is disturbingly eerie and the threat of an attack looms in all directions. At the gate, no one stands guard and the city streets are quiet and still.

"Desertion" comes to mind.
"Abandoned" and "derelict" are others.

The only indication that anyone lives here is a single sign, hanging from the open gate.

Gottheit.

Population 1,200.

As you stand at the gate, trying to piece together the mystery, a low, still moan echoes from the village and fills the surrounding air with dread.

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For use with
UNDEAD
d20 Sourcebook
by AEG

Requires the use of the
Dungeons & Dragons® Player's Handbook,
Third Edition, published by
Wizards of the Coast®



HOW TO USE THIS PRODUCT

This adventure is designed to be easily dropped into your existing *Third-Edition D&D* campaign. It can be run in a just a single session and makes for an excellent evening's gaming. To prepare yourself to run the adventure, you should read it completely at least once to familiarize yourself with the material. You may wish to photocopy the map in the center of the book for ease of use as well. The text on the back of the book can be read to your players to introduce them to the adventure. After that, you're ready to begin. Good luck!

DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS

This module requires the use of the *Dungeons and Dragons® Player's Handbook, Third Edition*, published by Wizards of the Coast.® You won't be able to run this adventure without it.

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Packed with details on the undead, tools for fighting them, magic items, spells, and over a dozen prestige classes, this book promises to provide GMs and PCs with months of campaign ideas. From the team that brought you *Dragons and Evil*, comes a new dimension in fantasy gaming.
(128 Pages, Softbound)



GAME MASTER BACKGROUND

Gottheit is an adventure designed for four to six characters of levels 9–11. It takes place in the deserted town of Gottheit, and each encounter draws the PCs closer to the heart of the mystery that lurks behind the city's veneer. What happened to the people who once lived here?

Until recently, Gottheit was known as a kind and pious town, devoted to the sun god. Its piety so strong, that the Temple was placed in the center of town for all to see. Travelers were welcome in Gottheit — although less with merriment than with an earnest hospitality that most found disconcerting. They reported that the residents engaged in much discussion of abstract questions of ethics and morality and often worried aloud whether they were doing right by their fellow townspeople.

Then, about six months ago, a priest calling himself Akinos came to Gottheit. He set himself in the town square and began to preach. Much to everyone's dismay, he denounced the sun god as false, one who would only lead them astray. He declared that the god he followed, Belthus, was the only true wellspring of righteousness and piety. The townspeople reacted to his sermon with outrage at first, but it seemed that Akinos understood their insecurities and before long, he persuaded them of the validity of his words. When the local priests emerged from their temple to stop him, he accused them of committing dark and horrible deeds in secret and betraying the people's trust. Akinos claimed that he had communed with his god, who had told him to come to Gottheit, cast out the false priests of Pelor and show the people the error of their ways. Using powerful magic to prove his claims, he performed "miracles" and created the illusion that the priests were possessed. He persuaded the townspeople to drive them out and install him as their religious leader.

Unfortunately for Gottheit, Akinos was no righteous mendicant out to show the world the straight and narrow path. He was, in fact, the polymorphed avatar of Bal-Shezzer, an evil deity who delights in treachery and betrayal, and his virtuous god "Belthus" was a fiction created to seduce the credulous. Akinos came to Gottheit for no other purpose than to wreak a terrible evil on the town. Knowing that deep down, they doubted the fundamental decency of their lives, he rendered them vulnerable to an evil fate worthy of his darkest malice.

Soon after Akinos installed himself in the former temple (now rededicated to "Belthus"), the people of Gottheit woke to find some of their fellow townspeople had disappeared overnight. Akinos explained that Belthus had come and taken the unrighteous from the midst. So great was their belief in him that the townspeople did not question it. In truth, Akinos drained the life force from the townspeople and transported their remains to his native plane. Using his *staff of planar transport* (for more information, refer to the *New Magic Item* entry at the end of this module), the avatar of Bal-Shezzer, began his reign of tyranny over Gottheit.

Once he depopulated the town to a manageable size, he brought his terrible plan to fulfillment. In a single night of terror, he slew those of Gottheit who remained, transporting them to his native plane, where they perished in unspeakable agony. With his purpose now complete, Akinos lingers in Gottheit only to make sure of his triumph before he descends upon another corner of the world. Since deceit is key to his success, the PCs pose a threat to him. If they discover the true fate of the townspeople, they might warn others before he strikes again.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

Gottheit is event-based, rather than location-based. That is to say, the encounters described below are not tied to a geographical location, but rather to a place in a chain of events. What matters is the sequence in which your players experience the encounters, not where the encounters occur. For instance, it doesn't matter what quarter of Gottheit the PCs are exploring when they run into the ogres described in encounter #2, but it does matter that they run into the ogres early on. The PCs should experience the encounters in the order described below.

The Temple of Bal-Shezzer is the main exception to the rule. It is important that the PCs do not explore the temple too early in the adventure, however lest they stumble upon the climactic encounter before you've had a chance to build to it. If the PCs head straight for the Temple, throw the intervening encounters at them or simply move Akinos somewhere else in the town.

THE TOWN OF GOTTHEIT (SEE MAP)

Since there are no secrets on the map, feel free to photocopy it and lay it out on the table for the players. You may want to blot out the numbers, but this is up to you. For your convenience, a copy of this map can be found on the AEG website (www.alderac.com).

MOOD

Gottheit is best played at night as the PCs are just finishing the leg of a lengthy trip. The mist and darkness should keep the PCs on their toes. Visibility is ten to fifteen feet even with a light source. Low-light vision is severely hampered and PCs with darkvision see little more than fog up to 30 feet. Lastly, do not be afraid to throw ghouls at them from time to time.

A. GUARDBOUSES

Each town gate has a small guardhouse associated with it. Reinforcements stood ready here, and prisoners were detained in holding cells. Gottheit rarely sees trouble however, except for the infrequent ogre raid. There are 4d6 arrows, bolts, and sling stones. Polearms, spears and swords are also stored here, but no more 4 of each.

A Search check (DC 25, 20 with a light source) reveals a small cache of coins (55 sp) stored under a quiver of arrows in one of the guardhouses.

B. THE LAZY EYE

The Lazy Eye is a three-story building with a sign over the front door depicting a beholder with its main eye closed. The Lazy Eye was Gottheit's premier public house and traveler's inn. Except for some traveler's rations, what food remains is rotted or stale. The water, ale and wine are drinkable, however. In the cellar is a case of particularly fine wine worth 500 gp. It weighs 50 pounds and must be carried in both hands (although a large-sized or larger humanoid may tuck it under one arm). In the back office rests a strongbox. It is locked with a difficult three-tumbler lock (Open Locks, DC 40). Bram (*see encounter #4 for further details*) has the only remaining key. The strongbox contains 4,429 gp and a soft-white pearl worth 500 gp.

C. MAYOR'S RESIDENCE

The largest residential structure in town is the mayor's manor. Here, the mayor lived and received visitors. In the largest bedroom is an unlocked chest containing 2,415 gp and a *potion of cure serious wounds*.

D. TEMPLE OF BELTHUS

After the residents of Gottheit converted Belthus' worship, the temple remained the center of religious life. It was defaced to remove all references to the previous god. All depictions of the sun (paintings and sculptures) were scraped or smashed, replaced by Belthus' holy symbol — a crooked staff encircled by a golden halo. Belthus himself is depicted as a stern-looking man carrying the staff and a hastily carved statue of him stands behind the altar.

The basement of the temple holds, among other things, offerings to the sun god that accumulated over the years. The priests kept the most valuable gifts in a large unlocked chest. Presently, these amount to approximately 2,500 pp, 10,000 gp, 10,000 sp and 5 gems worth 250 gp each. There are also two holy symbols to the sun god, each hanging as a pendant from a gold chain; one is carved from ivory and is worth 200 gp, while the other is fashioned from yellow quartz and is worth 100 gp.

E. RUINS

Most of the village lies in ruins or is derelict. Everywhere the PCs go in the village, they find buildings quiet and empty or shattered and unsettling. Make up the interiors as you see fit for the homes and businesses.

F. OGRE TRIBES

Tribes of ogres and their dependant orcs live in these hills. From time to time, they raided Gottheit and harassed travelers coming and going, but now they usually leave it alone, regarding it with mild curiosity at most. The details of their social organization and the treasures that they guard are beyond the scope of this adventure. Suffice it to say that if the PCs are fooled or distracted by the red herring in encounter #2, there are more than enough in these hills to overwhelm even a party of four to six heavily equipped, high-level characters.

ENCOUNTERS

As the PCs come upon each encounter, read the boxed text aloud to them, or paraphrase it for their benefit. Begin with encounter #1 once the PCs have passed through the main gates and have more or less committed themselves to exploring the town.

1. NO ONE HOME

Desolation greets you. The streets of Gottheit are completely deserted. Through the windows, it is evident that every building is empty. None of the chatter and noise exists that one expects to hear passing through a town of this size during the day. There is only silence. Yet, something reaches you on the morning breeze. You hear it only dimly, and you wonder if you really heard it at all. It might have been a voice, or something else...

Suddenly, a swarm of rats appears. They seem headed for the town gate and do not attack the PCs. If they are attacked, they flee.

The first important fact to establish about the present state of Gottheit is that the town is absolutely deserted. There's no one home; not a single living soul. It allows the mood to be established early on that something is wrong here. If the PCs look for ephemeral information as to why the rats flee, it is because there is no food. But in reality, something is afoot.

Rats (20): CR 1/8; SZ T (animal); HD 1/4d8; hp 1; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 15 ft., climb 15 ft., AC 14 (+2 size, +2 Dex); Atks Bite +4 melee (1d3-4); SQ Scent; SV Fort +2, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 2; AL N. Skills: Balance +10, Climb +12, Hide +18, Move Silently +10. Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite).

2. OGRES WERE THEIR NEIGHBORS

As you turn a corner, you find yourself face-to-face with a group of seven large, ferociously ugly creatures. The foremost among them is slightly taller and uglier than the rest, with lurid green skin and a pair of short horns protruding from its forehead. Upon seeing you, they stop in their tracks and shift their weight to their heels. They look you over with a cautious squint, but make no other move. The leader growls, "Who you?"

These **6 ogres (hp 26)** are a scouting party sent by one of the tribes from the nearby hills. The leader is an **ogre mage (hp 37)** who speaks halting, but comprehensible Common. The other ogres speak only Giant. Their tribe sent them to find out what was going on once they realized that Gottheit had fallen completely silent.

The strangeness of this situation increases when the ogres do not attack the PCs on sight. Their job is to gather intelligence (to the best of their ability, at any rate),

but they are unnerved by the silence of Gottheit. They have no stomach for a fight. The ogre mage questions the PCs to see if they know what's going on. In return he tells the PCs what he knows, which is very little.

If the PCs accuse the ogres of having something to do with the town's depopulation, the ogre mage vigorously denies it. If they attack the ogres, they retreat.

If, for some reason, the PCs decide to track the ogres back to their lair, see the notes to location E, above. No doubt, there is treasure to be gained and glory to be won in the hills, but it all falls outside the scope of this adventure. GMs could set up the home of the ogre tribes as a series of encounters that your players can pursue, but that is entirely up to you. Alternately, a forthcoming Adventure Keep by AEG called the *Ogre City of Drakh-Suhl* could be adapted. For space considerations, the ogre stats are not printed here.

3. A WARNING FROM SOME GHOULS

Down the street, four gaunt humanoid figures converge — slowly, yet menacingly. Their mottled, decaying flesh stretches taut across their bones, and their deep-set eyes glow like hot coals. Their lips do not move, yet they growl: "Leave... go... death awaits."

These **ghouls (hp 20)** were once townspeople of Gottheit. Bal-Shezzer created them and sent them back to the Material Plane through Akinos as a warning to the PCs. They deliver their warning and attack if the PCs do not heed it. If the PCs speak with them, they only repeat their warning. If it comes to a pitched battle, they fight to the death. If this confrontation does not discourage the PCs, Bal-Shezzer delivers more dangerous warnings later.

Ghouls (4): CR 1; SZ M (undead); HD 2d12; hp 20; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 natural); Atks Bite +3 melee (1d6+1, paralysis), 2 claws +0 melee (1d3, paralysis); SA Paralysis, create spawn; SQ Undead, +2 turn resistance; SV Fort +0, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 15, Con —, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 16; AL CE. Skills: Climb +6, Escape Artist +7, Hide +7, Intuit Direction +3, Jump +6, Listen +7, Move silently +7, Search +6, Spot +7. Feats: Multiattack, Weapon Finesse (bite).

4. THE SOLE SURVIVOR

From the corner of your eye, the first living human in Gottheit comes into view. He is about three feet tall, and at present, he is huddled behind a rain barrel, twitching and gibbering. He wears a nightshirt badly stained with dirt, and his eyes are blank and dazed. He isn't a human at all... but a halfling.

This wretched fellow is Bram, the halfling assistant manager of The Lazy Eye inn and tavern. He is the only survivor of (and therefore the only witness to) that terrible

night when everyone else in Gottheit was swept off of the face of the earth. Unfortunately, he is still half-crazed from the shock and he can only explain his impressions of what happened in fragments. In his present condition, he alternates between wandering the empty streets in a daze and cowering and gibbering in whatever hiding place he can find.

If the PCs question him, he replies as best as he can. He tells them who he is, what his job was and that he has lived in Gottheit his entire life. Other questions and answers follow.

What happened to the townspeople?

"It came in the middle of the night... everyone disappeared... into thin air, just like that... like magic... the screams, the screams... everyone, gone..." If asked the identity of it, Bram screams —the associated memory is far too painful. The PCs get no answer from him.

When did it happen?

"A couple... a couple of nights ago..."

How did you escape?

"Hid, hid... deepest, darkest corner... inn... father always said, 'A halfling won't be found 'less he wants to be found.'"

If the PCs offer their protection, Bram follows, although without much comprehension of what is going on. At the first sight of undead, he screams and runs in the opposite direction, and no means short of magical control (e.g., *hold person*) can persuade him to stay. If the PCs decide to leave him, he offers no protest, and simply continues to wander and hide. They may encounter him again, if the GM decides that there is some point to it.

Bram carries the key to the strongbox in *The Lazy Eye* (see *location B*, on page 3) on a chain around his neck, but he has no other belongings on his person.

Bram: CR 1/2; SZ S (humanoid, halfling); HD 1d8; hp 4; Init +1; Spd 20 ft., AC 12 (+1 size, +1 Dex); Atks -1 melee (1d2 subdual, unarmed strike); SQ Halfling traits; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +1; Str 8, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 11, Cha 11. AL NG. Skills: Climb +0, Hide +5, Jump +0, Listen +3, Move Silently +4. Feats: Dodge.

5. TOWN ELDERS

Three gray shapes with the consistency of fine mist appear before you. They hover and undulate in the breeze. They are vaguely humanoid in shape, and each has a gold medallion on a chain around its neck. The features of their faces are contorted in terrible agony.

"Leave this place," one of them says.

Says another, "The God wills it."

The third says, "Leave, or the God will kill you as He killed us."

These spectral creatures are **wisps (hp 37)** (refer to the *New Monster* entry at the end of this adventure for further details). In life, they were town elders of Gottheit. Bal-Shezzer created them as undead and has sent them to chase the PCs out of town. They retain a memory of who they were when they were alive, and if they are asked about that, they say that they were once important men in Gottheit. But if the PCs try to interrogate them further they reveal nothing. They exist only to carry out the wishes of the dark god who destroyed them. Oddly enough, however, they each retain a physical symbol identifying them as the men they once were — the gold medallions hanging around their necks. These remain if the wisps are destroyed. Each is worth 50 gp for their gold content.

Wisps (3): CR 5; SZ M (undead); HD 4d12; hp 37; Init +7; Spd 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good); AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 deflection); Atks Incorporeal touch +5 melee (1d4, plus 1d6 permanent Constitution drain); SA Constitution drain, create spawn; SQ Undead, incorporeal, +2 turn resistance; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +6; Str —, Dex 16, Con —, Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 15. AL LE. Skills: Hide +11, Intimidate +10, Intuit Direction +6, Listen +12, Search +10, Sense Motive +8, Spot +12. Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative.

6. THE MAYOR — OR WHAT'S LEFT OF HIM

A pair of eyes stare at you from a nearby window. A head as gray as death itself with deep-set eyes as black as an abyss disappears momentarily as the creature to which it belongs moves to the door and flings it open. "Leave while you can, fools!" it calls out in a deep, dark voice. Then it staggers in the doorway and you hear a strangling noise. "Please... the god... destroyed us all... I must do his bidding... Help me... Go to the Temple... That priest..."

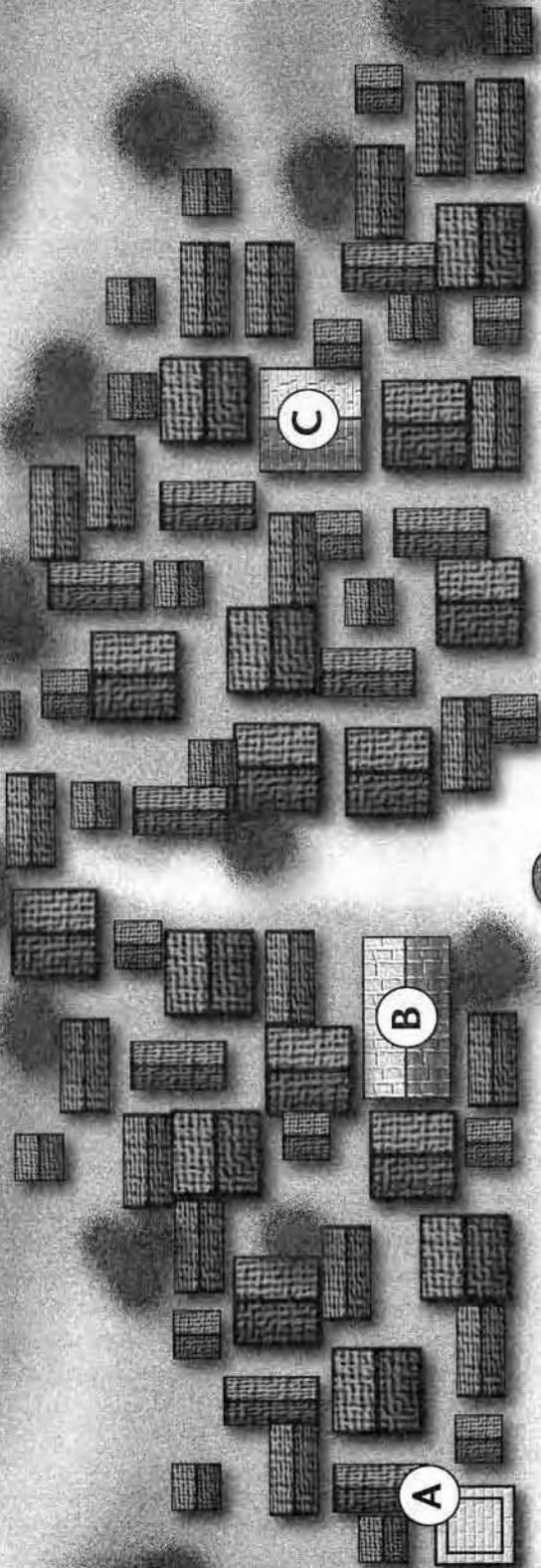
This bodak was once the Mayor of Gottheit and he, too, was created as an undead by Bal-Shezzer to drive away the PCs. However, as it spotted the PCs it had one of those flashbacks to its former life to which bodaks are prone, so that it remembers more or less who it was and what happened to that person. What the PCs witness is this former self struggling with the evil that impels the bodak to do Bal-Shezzer's dirty work.

The **bodak/mayor (hp 58)** answers their questions as truthfully as he can, although in a halting and fragmentary manner. He does not know the name of the god to which he refers, only that it is evil and that the priest Akinos is connected with it. He understands that Akinos deceived the people of Gottheit and is somehow responsible for their doom, but will have difficulty verbalizing this.

THE TOWN OF GOTTHEIT



E



C

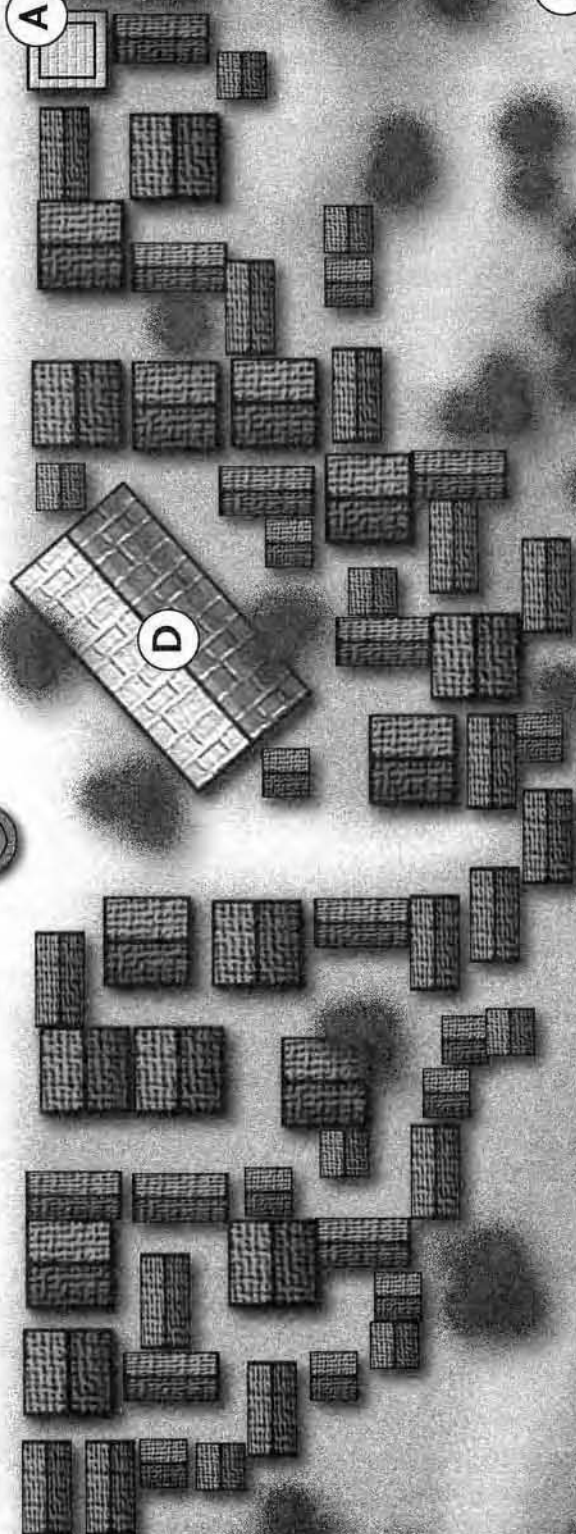
B

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He remembers the night when Bal-Shezzer completed the massacre as one of confusion and horrified screams; he remembers stepping out of his door and seeing people running through the streets in their nightclothes, their faces so white that they seemed to light up the darkness. He was, he thinks, one of the last to be taken. He remembers nothing about his actual death. After 10 minutes of interrogations, the evil that drives the creature finally wins out. It gives out a strangled cry and attacks.

Once combat begins, the bodak suffers a -2 penalty to all attacks directed at the PCs, as it experienced a flashback to its former life at the very beginning of the encounter. It has already suffered the loss of a full action by the time combat is joined.

Like the wisps, the bodak wears a medallion on a gold chain around its neck, except that this mayoral badge has a semi-precious stone set in it. It is worth 150 gp.

Bodak: CR 2; SZ M (undead); HD 10d12; hp 58; Init +6; Spd 20 ft., AC 15 (+2 Dex, +3 natural); Atks Slam +6 melee (1d8+1); SA Death gaze; SQ Damage reduction 15/silver, fire and acid resistance 20, electricity immunity, sunlight vulnerability, flashbacks; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +7; Str 13, Dex 15, Con —, Int 6, Wis 12, Cha 12; AL CE. Skills: Listen +11, Move Silently +14, Spot +13. Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (slam).

7. ANOTHER "SOLE" SURVIVOR

A pale woman wearing nothing but rags huddles against the side of a building, moaning piteously. Her face is stained with dirt and her hair lies in dank wisps against her cheek. "Please... help me," she groans, over and over again.

If the PCs stop to aid her, she tells them that her name is Barnardina, and that she survived Gottheit's terrible night of slaughter. Unfortunately for the PCs, "Barnardina" is really a rakshasa summoned by Bal-Shezzer to deceive them. Using its *alternate form* ability, it has disguised itself as a survivor of the massacre to get them to drop their guard. It uses its *detect thoughts* ability to anticipate the PCs' actions and judge the effectiveness of its own deception. If it looks like they see through its disguise, it reveals its true form and attacks them immediately. If its charade appears to be working, however, it looks for a moment when they drop their guard — if they turn their backs or leave it alone with a PC, for instance — it attacks as soon as it finds the opportunity.

If the PCs question it, "Barnardina" caters to their greatest anxieties or desires to discourage them. If they ask about the massacre, it stresses the pure horror of the experience. If they ask about the god, it describes an entity that absolutely cannot be defeated. If they ask about treasure in the town, it replies that Gottheit was poor and no one had any wealth to speak of. And so on.

If the rakshasa decides to attack, it uses its first action to cast *protection from good* on itself if it has reason to believe that it faces opponents of good alignment. Otherwise, it casts *mirror image* and uses the ensuing confusion to run for the nearest partial cover, from which it casts its damage-causing spells, beginning with the most powerful. Rakshasas disdain melee combat, so it tries to remain at standoff range as long as it has spells that can inflict damage from a distance. Once PCs begin to close with it, the rakshasa casts *summon monster II* to interpose a fiendish wolf between it and its closest attacker.

Rakshasa: CR 9; SZ M (outsider); HD 7d8+21; hp 52; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 21 (+2 Dex, +9 natural); Atks 2 Claws +8 melee (1d4+1), +3 melee (1d6 bite); SA *detect thoughts*, spells; SQ Alternate form, spell immunity, vulnerability to blessed crossbow bolts, damage reduction 20/+3; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +6; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 1; AL LE. Skills: Bluff +16, Disguise +17, Listen +11, Move Silently +11, Perform (ballad, buffoonery, chant, comedy, dance, drama, epic, ode, storytelling) +12, Sense Motive +10, Spot +12. Feats: Alertness, Dodge. Spells: 0: *ray of frost*, *daze*, *ghost sound*, *detect magic*; 1st: *protection from good*, *charm person*, *magic missile* x2; 2nd: *summon monster II*, *hypnotic pattern*, *mirror image*; 3rd: *fireball*, *lightning bolt*; 4th: *ice storm*.

8. THE TEMPLE

Entering the Temple, the ghostly form of a solidly built woman wearing full plate armor and clutching a sword materializes out of thin air. Her gaze is stern, but her cheeks are sunken, as if she endured much suffering before she died. "Heed me, warriors!" she calls out, "for I was once Mitrea, the guardian of this temple. Do not make the same mistake as I. Akinos serves an evil god. If you stand and fight, kill him. Or your fate is sealed."

This tormented ghost speaks the truth; it was once Mitrea, an 8th level fighter who served this temple, but was seduced, entering the service of Belthus after they cast out the priests. She was slain along with the rest of the townspeople, dying in unutterable torment on Bal-Shezzer's native plane before she knew what had happened to her. This is the PC's final warning that they are dealing in matters that they ought to leave well enough alone.

As a ghost, Mitrea retains full memory of who she was in life. She has enough willpower to answer the PC's questions honestly, and with reasonable fullness before attacking them (see is a ghost in Bal-Shazzar's temple after all). She does not realize that Akinos is the avatar instead of a mere servant of his god, and she does not know that Belthus is really Bal-Shezzer. But she knows everything else about Akinos' deceptio and the massacre. She tells the PCs to beware of his staff, but does not know exactly why they should watch out for it. She does know that Akinos is presently in the basement of the Temple. When the PCs have finished questioning her, she utters a piercing, agonized cry as Bel-Shezzer compels her to attack. "For the

sake of all that is holy, destroy me!" she wails (if the party defeats Akinos, Mitrea's ghost will not rejuvenate).

Ghost of Mitrea, Guardian of Pelor: CR 10; SZ M (undead, incorporeal); HD 8d12; hp 52; Init +7; Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect), AC 21 (+3 Dex, +8 full plate); Atks Incorporeal touch +11 melee (1d4), or bastard sword +11 melee (1d10+4); SA Manifestation, corrupting touch, malevolence; SQ Undead, incorporeal, +4 turn resistance, rejuvenation; SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 18, Dex 16, Con —, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 17; AL N. Skills: Climb +4, Handle Animals +4, Jump +4, Listen +4, Search +2, Spot +4. Feats: Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Critical (bastard sword), Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bastard sword).

ENTRANCE TO THE BASEMENT SANCTUM

Assuming that the PCs get past Mitrea's ghost, they notice the door near the entrance that leads down to the Temple basement. It is locked (DC 20 to unlock), and guarded by a trap (DC 25 to detect and DC 25 to disarm). This trap was crafted by Akinos himself, and contains the debilitating essence of a shadow's touch. Whoever sets it off suffers 1d6 points of permanent Strength damage.

9. THE AVATAR OF BAL-SHEZZER

When the PCs reach the basement, a man with striking features and priestly robes stands before them.

"Fools! Why do you come here? You cannot save the people of this insignificant little town. I have sent them all to satisfy the appetites of Bel-Shezzer. My servants tried to warn you away, but you did not heed them. Very well. But first, I wish to know who you are, before Bel-Shezzer honors you with an exquisitely painful death."

When the PCs come upon Akinos (*refer to the New Monster entry at the end of this adventure for further details*), they see him in the priestly disguise that he assumed to dupe the folk of Gottheit. If they engage him in conversation, Akinos indulges them. He is curious about who they are, and provides most any detail about the destruction of Gottheit that they haven't worked out yet, except for the role and function of his staff of planar transport (*refer to the New Magic Item entry at the end of this adventure for further details*). He doesn't intend to let them live to pass the information along, anyway.

Before combat begins, Akinos drops his disguise and resume his true form. As a general principal, he wants to kill the entire party, to prevent them telling anyone what really happened to Gottheit. He however, is very smart and does not provide them opportunities to flank him or deal massive amounts of damage in a single round. His entry provide more information on how he fights.

Akinos has one *staff of planar transport* left, but it has only one charge remaining in it. On his first standard action

after he is reduced to 10 hp or fewer, he uses the staff to transport himself to his native plane. Note that he has already used up his *gate* and *plane shift* abilities for the day, moving the undead created from the former inhabitants of Gottheit back to the Material Plane. If he is reduced to 0 hp or fewer before he has a chance to flee, a terrible shriek emerges from him and he shrinks into a pinprick of blackness like a liquid spiraling down a drain, then disappears, leaving the magical staff behind him. The PCs also find four more *staves of planar transport* leaning against the wall of the basement, but they are all drained so that they are really just +4 *quarterstaves*.

CONCLUSION

If the PCs defeat Akinos, they force him to return to his native plane and the damage that they inflict on him prevents him from wreaking more havoc in the Material Plane, for a while. It is far too late to save the good citizens of Gottheit, however. Bram never recovers; the scars of this experience lingering in his psyche. It is inconceivable that he would stay here and try to rebuild. Even so, the PCs may take satisfaction from having banished a great evil from their world, even if only for a time.

Of course, there is also the matter of the various treasure caches lying around town, as well as the horde in the Temple basement. Lawful or good characters may debate the ethics of looting possessions that once belonged to the innocent residents of this unfortunate town (to say nothing of money that was given as offerings to a good deity). But the dead — or even the undead — have less use for gems and coin of the realm than do the living, and in any event, no witnesses will ever be able to tell how the PCs came into possession of them.

NEW MONSTERS

AKINOS, AVATAR OF BEL-SHEZZER

Akinos is the avatar of the god of treachery and deceit Bel-Shezzer, and he ordinarily dwells in an evil realm that bears that name. He often journeys to other planes to carry out his god's will, luring innocents to their destruction. What he did to Gottheit is fairly typical. Using his ability to change form, he wins the trust of a sizeable group of people. Then, when they are most vulnerable, he uses his powers and *staves of planar transport* to sweep them off to his native plane, where Bel-Shezzer drains them of their lives in ways too unspeakably cruel to mention.

If Akinos suffers damage in excess of his hit points, he is defeated, but not permanently destroyed. He simple retreats to his native plane, from which he may not venture again until he has healed himself of his wounds (at a rate of 1 point per week, Bel-Shezzer does not reward failure).

In his natural form, Akinos is a 10-foot tall humanoid as black as the Abyss. His coloration is so deeply dark that he

looks like a silhouette from a distance and it is impossible to make out facial features or even the contours of his body unless you are standing right in front of him — and if you're that close to him, you won't have time to notice very much.

COMBAT

Energy Drain (Ex): In melee combat, Akinos uses a slam attack that not only causes damage, but drains the life force from his target. Any living creature struck by his slam attack also suffers two negative levels in damage. A Fort save DC 20, resists one level of draining.

Unholy Aura (Su): As the manifestation of an evil god, Akinos is protected from good as if *unholy aura* has been cast on him. The effects are continuously active.

Alternate Form (Su): Akinos can assume any humanoid form, or revert to his own form, as a standard action. This ability functions as does *alter self* cast by a 15th level sorcerer, lasting as long as Akinos wishes.

Spells: Akinos may cast spells as a 15th level cleric. He has access to the following spells. At will he may cast *deepen darkness*, *detect good*, *detect magic*, *dispel magic*, *hold person*, *knock*. Three times per day he may cast *create undead*. Twice per day he may cast *circle of doom*, *create greater undead*, *gate*, *plane shift*, *power word (blind)*, *slay living*.

Large Outsider (Chaotic, Evil)
Hit Dice: 16d8+80 (150 hp)
Initiative: +0
Speed: 40 ft., fly 30 ft. (good)
AC: 24 (-1 size, +15 natural)
Attacks: +4 staff of planar transport
+28/+23/+18/+13 melee;
or 2 slams +26 melee
Damage: staff 1d6+11; or slam
1d8+7 and energy drain
Face/Reach: 5 ft./ by 5 ft./10 ft.
Special Attacks: Spells, energy drain
Special Qualities: Unholy aura,
alternate form, damage reduction
30/+3, SR 30
Saves: Fort +15, Ref +10, Will +19
Abilities: Str 25, Dex 10, Con 20,
Int 30, Wis 28, Cha 30

Skills: Bluff +22, Diplomacy +22,
Hide + 17, Intimidate +22, Intuit
Direction +21, Listen +21, Move
Silently +17, Perform (oratory)
+22, Search +22, Sense Motive
+21, Spot +21
Feats: Blind-Fight, Combat Reflexes,
Craft Staff, Craft Wondrous Item,
Dodge, Improved Critical
(quarterstaff), Weapon Focus
(quarterstaff)
Climate/Terrain: Any land and
underground
Organization: Solitary
Challenge Rating: 15
Treasure: None
Alignment: Always chaotic evil
Advancement Range: None

WISPS

True to their name, wisps are incorporeal undead, appearing as fine mist. They undulate slightly, which gives the impression that they are flapping in the breeze. Like many incorporeal undead, they often appear in a reasonable replication of the form that they took in life. Unlike most incorporeal undead, however, they do not fear sunlight, and can use all of their capabilities in the open during the day.

Medium-Size Undead (Incorporeal)
Hit Dice: 4d12 (26 hp)
Initiative: +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved
Initiative)
Speed: 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good)
AC: 15 (+3 Dex, +2 deflection)
Attacks: Incorporeal touch +5 melee
Damage: Incorporeal touch 1d4 and
1d6 permanent Constitution
drain
Face/Reach: 5 ft./ by 5 ft./5 ft.
Special Attacks: Constitution drain,
create spawn
Special Qualities: Undead,
incorporeal, +2 turn resistance
Saves: Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +6
Abilities: Str —, Dex 16, Con —,
Int 14, Wis 14, Cha 15
Skills: Hide +11, Intimidate +10,
Intuit Direction +6, Listen +12,
Search +10, Sense Motive +8,
Spot +12
Feats: Alertness, Blind-Fight,
Combat Reflexes, Improved
Initiative
Climate/Terrain: Any land and
underground
Organization: Solitary, gang (2–5)
or pack (6–11)
Challenge Rating: 5
Treasure: None
Alignment: Usually lawful evil
Advancement Range: 6–10 HD
(Medium-size)

COMBAT

When attacking in groups, wisps use their speed and numbers to flank or surround their opponents.

Constitution Drain (Su): Living creatures hit by a wisp's incorporeal touch attack must make a successful Fortitude saving throw (DC 15) or suffer 1d6 points of temporary Constitution damage.

Create Spawn (Su): Any humanoid slain by a wisp becomes a wisp in 1d4 hours. It remains under the command of the wisp that created it until either is destroyed. Spawn do not retain any abilities they had in life.

Undead: Wisps are immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning and disease. Nor are they subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain or death from massive damage.

Incorporeal: Wisps can only be harmed by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or better magic weapons, or magic, with a 50% chance that they ignore any damage from a corporeal source. They always move silently and can pass through solid objects at will.

NEW MAGIC ITEM

STAFF OF PLANAR TRANSPORT

Minor Artifact

The *staff of planar transport* is a relatively unique item, because only Akinos knows how to make one. The staff need not touch a creature in order to shift it to another plane, and if more than one creature is to be transported, they need not be touching each other nor be willing participants. Instead, the staff projects a cone of arcane energy 60 feet long and 30 feet wide and every target caught in that area is instantly transported to a plane of the user's choice. If a creature resists, it may negate the effect with a successful Will saving throw (DC 20).

It can also be wielded in melee combat as a magic +4 *quarterstaff*, even once all the charges are used.

Caster Level: 20th; *weight:* 1 lb.

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