



ADVENTURE PATH • PART 5 of 6

ASHES AT DAWN

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ADVENTURE PATH™

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“Ashes at Dawn” is a Pathfinder Adventure Path scenario designed for four 11th-level characters.
By the end of this adventure, characters should reach 13th level.

This product makes use of the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*, and *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 2*. These rules can be found online as part of the Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Reference Document at paizo.com/pathfinderRPG/prd.

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Carrion Crown



Bloodsuckers

This is the most frightening volume in the Carrion Crown Adventure Path. Well, for me at least, because now it's time to see if I'm a liar.

We'd been talking vaguely about Carrion Crown since PaizoCon 2010, when someone on the messageboards eventually hit us with what seemed to me to be a very obvious question: "Why would I help the vampires?" I understand this sort of question when all the details about a campaign's plot are unreleased, abbreviated, or still forming. But as we weren't ready or even able to release a lot of details yet, my only answer was essentially, "They have something the PCs want, putting characters into a 'You scratch our backs and we'll scratch yours' situation."

For a certain subset of those in the discussion, this was not an acceptable answer.

"But vampires are evil!" "My party won't work for the undead!" "I'm a paladin!" Wah, wah, wah!

The world's a hard place, and even harder when there're *fireballs* and zombies! Toughen up!

I wrote and deleted responses running the gamut of diplomatic shades, but I never posted anything with quite that tone. Most frustratingly, after considering and discussing the concern for a few days, I was forced to admit there was some validity to it. So I told folks we had top men on the job—I was planning to write it myself, after all—and assured them that, come volume #47, they'd be pleased with the outcome.

Well, you're holding the outcome in your hands.

You don't have to dig deep through Paizo's backlist to catch the drift of my tastes. In short, I also always rooted for Skeletor over He-Man and the Joker over Batman. So obviously, like many GMs, I like the bad guys, I like overwhelming odds, and I like shades of gray and seeing the heroes forced beyond their comfort zones.

But some folks like their adventures in black and white—the good guys are good, the monsters are bad. That sounds simplistic, but in a game where factors like alignment might be viewed as cementing one’s moral core into a two-letter abbreviation, why shouldn’t it be that easy? On top of that, there are game rules built upon being able to place every character and creature into one of nine ethical compartments, granting real benefits or penalties based on which quadrant one falls into.

And most of the time this works just fine.

As is typically the case, though, things get hazy as soon as they get into matters of personal interpretation. Let’s take the cases most likely to be drummed up by this particular adventure. Is it evil (or against the tenants of her faith) for a worshiper of Pharasma to do anything aside from launch into a crusade against the vampires of Caliphaz? Or, even more basically: vampires are evil, so does my paladin lose his abilities by not immediately attacking them?

In both cases, I’d say no. While neither group should be happy about the situation, when their choices are a) prevent someone from murdering evil monsters to stop a cult from recreating the greatest villain Golarion has ever known, or b) don’t, and thus passively allow this unholy resurrection, it’ll be up to them to decide which threat is more dire and what’s in their faith’s best interests. But this is where it’s actually up to a GM to make the call, not me. While paladins have a proviso in their code that allows them to temporarily fraternize with evil characters in the pursuit of a greater good, it’s the Pharasmians that make things a little hazier. Pharasma hates undead, and her church seeks their destruction, but does that mean that one of her faith has to go on an undead killing spree when faced with the options above? I’d say that Pharasma, being a goddess with insight and foresight beyond any mortal, would understand the decision of one of her followers to temporarily ally with enemies to stave off a proven greater threat.

Again, though, it’s not my call, it’s a choice for the adventure’s GM. As a group’s GM is the final authority on how the rules work in his game and how interpretive elements interact with his group and campaign, it’s up to him to decide whether or not characters can take the occasional walk on the dark side, and what the ramifications of doing so might be.

With all that in mind, once it became clear I wasn’t going to be able to personally fulfill my promises, I started looking for someone who could. After he had just finished doing such an awesome job with *Pathfinder Adventure Path #42: Sanctum of the Serpent God*, Neil Spicer seemed like the man for the job. So I snagged Neil at Gen Con and in the Marriott lobby gave him the sales pitch on writing this adventure. He was all about it, but I told him right up front that there was a pretty huge catch: he was going to have to write this adventure in such a way that the players could

ON THE COVER

The mastermind behind Caliphaz’s coterie of vampiric elite, Luvick Siervage, rises from his coffin to grace this month’s cover. You’ll face this ancient vampire lord—or not—in this month’s adventure, “Ashes at Dawn.”

ally with the vampires or go through and slaughter them all. Oh, and he was getting no extra space or concessions to do so. Kind of a tall order. We spent the better part of an hour talking about how we could even do that, but in the end he accepted the challenge and headed off to put together an undead murder mystery.

You’ll find the results on the following pages. Ultimately, I’m quite pleased and think Neil did a great job. The adventure definitely assumes that the PCs are at least temporarily playing nice with the vampires, but even if they don’t, it—and, more importantly, the campaign—can still progress if an overzealous do-gooder launches a crusade. But whether you make nice with the vampire nobles of Caliphaz or wear your stakes down to nubs, that’s all up to you.

DANCES FOR THE DEAD

These days, vampire movies and their soundtracks are easy to find. Finding good ones useful to your roleplaying, however, is another matter. Here are a few.

Bell, Joshua: *The Red Violin*
 D’Ambrosio, Marco: *Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust*
 Giacchino, Michael: *Let Me In*
 Glass, Philip: *Dracula*
 Goldenthal, Elliot: *Interview with the Vampire*
 Jones, Trevor: *From Hell*
 Kid, Jesper: *Assassin’s Creed 2*
 Kilar, Wojciech: *Bram Stoker’s Dracula*
 Söderqvist, Johan: *Let the Right One In*
 Tartini, Giuseppe: *Violin Sonata in G minor*
 Zimmer, Hans: *Sherlock Holmes*



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