

Levels 7-10



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THE FLESH IS WEAK

by Travis Heermann

Not long ago, Alstand was a prosperous town, bustling with activity and commerce. Now, its streets are quiet and all but empty. Uneasy faces with hollow eyes peer through cracks in shuttered windows. Animals grow skittish in the town's narrow streets.

The few passersby warn that the town's residents are disappearing, one by one. Friends and neighbors vanish from their homes. The terrified townspeople whisper of ghastly noises coming from Watchman's Hill. Something is moving among the grim, dark stones of the old cemetery, which has stood still for a century.

The adventurers' horses shy away from the small figure that darts from the darkness of a half-open cottage door, an unkempt conglomeration of gaunt, dirty face, rumpled, unwashed clothes, and staring, blood-shot eyes. "Please! Can you help me?" He is a ten-year old boy, and his terrified gaze flicks in all directions, looking for danger. "Please! Something has taken my mother and father!"

THE FLESH IS WEAK

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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

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(128 Pages, Softbound)



GAME MASTER BACKGROUND

Three hundred years ago, a man named Lord Alstand founded a town with his namesake. He was an aged wizard, merely interested in a quiet life devoted to study. He sought the keys to eternal life. Lord Alstand was terrified of growing old and the older he grew, the stronger his obsession became. He managed to obtain a legendary artifact called *the rod of eternal life*, intending to use it to remain forever young. However, the power of the *rod* came with a terrible price: the possessor was forced to kill another and trap their life force into the rod at least once every 50 years.

Another perilous side effect of the rod resulted in the victims becoming blood wraiths, dangerous undead creatures trapped between the incorporeal world of wraiths and the ever-hungry world of vampires. A blood wraith is not favorably disposed to the person who originally killed them, but whoever holds the rod in his hand can control them.

To Lord Alstand's detriment, his first victim was his butler, Gascar. Lord Alstand mistakenly killed his trusted assistant when first learning to use the rod. When the blood wraith that had been Gascar first appeared, Lord Alstand discarded the rod in shame and guilt, not knowing that the rod could control the blood wraith. The aging wizard knew the terrible fate of those killed by the undead and he cut his own throat before the wraith could kill him.

The blood wraith wreaked havoc on the town, until the local cleric found the rod and learned to control the blood wraith. The cleric held the blood wraith at bay for days while the townspeople hastily constructed a crypt to house the dead Lord Alstand and trap the wraith. When the crypt was completed, the cleric forced the blood wraith into the crypt, sealing it with holy wards, guards, symbols and glyphs, hoping none would ever be foolish enough to break the seals.

In time, the events of the town's early days were forgotten, lost to disinterested generations. However, there is one who remembers, an old elf woman called Shee'netha. She was but a young maiden in those days.

A few months ago, a stranger came to town looking for information about the *rod of eternal life*. He had heard tales of an item that would allow one to live forever. No one knew what the stranger was talking about, since it had been locked within Lord Alstand's crypt, forgotten, for three hundred years. But the stranger was determined.

The last time anyone saw the stranger, he was headed to Watchman's Hill with a shovel and a pickaxe. He unwittingly broke the seals on Lord Alstand's crypt and released the blood wraith. The blood wraith, ravenous after centuries of confinement, immediately slew the would-be grave robber. Free from his imprisonment, the blood wraith seeks vengeance against the town — to consume the blood and souls of the decedents of those who trapped him. Once sated, it will lead a sizeable army of wights against the barony and perhaps the kingdom.

THE TOWN OF ALSTAND

Alstand is small town of about 500 people, mainly humans. Many of the town's details like wealth, government, racial distribution, and principal trade goods are left to the GM to tailor to his own campaign setting. The PCs might arrive here while on the way to somewhere else, unaware of the evil afoot until they blunder into it. Or perhaps they have heard tales from a passing traveler about a town in dire need of help. Or perhaps one of the townspeople has left his home in search of hardy adventurers to save the town from the evil festering on Watchman's Hill.

On the maps of Alstand and Watchman's Hill, each of the topographic lines encompassing Watchman's Hill represents a change in elevation of 10 ft. Therefore, the top of the hill rests at an elevation of 100 ft. above the town itself.

The mood of this adventure is one of a classic horror movie. The best time of year to stage this adventure is mid-autumn and the descriptions are written with that in mind. Lavish your descriptions of the town and countryside with dark skies, moaning winds, and wispy, low-hanging fog in the early morning and late evening. The PCs should be pulling their cloaks around them a little bit tighter before they even reach the town.

The land is mostly rolling grassland, with low hills and scattered groves of trees. The trees have dropped their leaves, now standing gnarled and naked against the chill wind of coming winter. A stiff, chill wind drives tumbling waves of dark clouds across the sky and rustling swarms of desiccated leaves across the ground. The road meanders through shallow valleys and low hills. The scream of a hawk drifts down as it floats upon the invisible currents of air, hovering almost motionless. In the distance, just visible over the surrounding landscape is a tall, rounded hill. The crumbling remains of what was once a stone watchtower sits like a grim, gray sentinel atop the rocky hill. Below, a small town huddles the valley.

Regardless of the time of day, from a distance the PCs see no activity. The windows are dark. The streets and surrounding fields are empty. The road carries no traffic except the PCs. The descriptions and events below assume that the PCs approach the town between dawn and dusk. Approaching at night is far more dangerous (*see below, Alstand by Night*).

When the PC's are within about a quarter mile of the hill, read the following:

The crumbling watchtower is not alone atop the hill. Numerous dark stone shapes jut from the rounded crest in haphazard order, encircled by a tall iron fence. Short, squatting stones, tall, standing stones, low-built tombs blockish, gray mausoleums all populate the hill. A cemetery, dark and morose on the rocky heath.

When the PC's reach the outskirts of town, read the following:

The road passes straight through the middle of Alstand, hemmed on both sides by two-story wood and stone shops, with the homes of the proprietors above. The only sounds are the mournful moans of the wind in the alleys and streets and the creaks of the shop signs at the wind's caress.

As the PCs move into town, successful Spot checks (DC 15) glimpse 1d6 individual townspeople hurrying through the streets. Any of the townspeople caught in the open speak quickly, rushing to shelter. They heartily recommend that the strangers do the same. Further Spot checks (DC 15) reveal that the PCs are being watched. A Spot check (DC 30) indicates that furtive eyes watch the PCs through cracks in tightly shuttered windows or doors.

Suddenly the door of a nearby cottage flies open and a small figure rushes out. His hair is unkempt and greasy. From behind a dirt smeared, his blood-shot eyes stare. "Please! Can you help me?" the ten-year old boy pleads. His terrified gaze flicks in all directions. "Please! My name is Johfig. Something took my mother and father last night! You must help me."

A Sense Motive check (DC 10) reveals that he is terrified, tired, and hungry. He appears to have not slept at all, and if the PCs ask, he confirms this. If it appears they might help, he clings to them as his mortal saviors.

If the PCs ask Johfig what happened here — read the following:

"About 10 days ago, Father came home from the tavern. He told a scary story about Imish and his parents. They disappeared right out of their house! They were the first ones! People disappear every night! Last night... last night... something... came and took them away! I could hear them. Whatever it was, it smelled awful, and I heard ... I heard Mother scream. She dropped a plate, I think. Father yelled for help, but then he stopped. I... I was so ... I hid in my room. I couldn't do anything!" He sobs uncontrollably. "I couldn't stop them!"

Johfig does not know what took his parents away. He could not bring himself to look.

WHAT IS HAPPENING IN ALSTAND?

Every night, the blood wraith and his growing army of wights descend from Watchman's Hill and break into homes and shops. The blood wraith feeds on the souls of the townspeople and the slain become wights under the

blood wraith's control. He savors the terror almost must as much as he enjoys the blood. He also knows that if he attacks in full force, he will likely frighten them all away, leaving him with no sustenance and no more potential followers. He attacks while his victims sleep, moving through walls and ceilings. The dead then rise as wights and follow him into the night.

As the townspeople from the edges disappeared first, the people living nearer the center of town grew ever more afraid. Many have left their homes to stay with relatives closer to the center of town. The town is collapsing on itself from fear. The people huddle closer and closer together as their numbers dwindle.

Soon after the disappearances began, several members of the town militia, accompanied by the local cleric, took their weapons and investigated the old cemetery. None of them returned. None have the courage to find out what happened.

After the PCs make inquiries, they may believe that a vampire is involved. Allow them to think so. Encourage it.

A. DEKIS' PLACE

Dekis' Place is one of two inns in town. Inside, the fires are burned out. Food is left half-prepared or half-eaten. Spot checks (DC 10) reveal no evidence of a struggle. In four of the guestrooms, bedcovers are strewn across the floor. Scrounging PCs find whatever meager treasures the GM desires. The innkeeper, Dekis, and his family disappeared last night, along with four guests.

B. THE OLD FLAGON INN

Many of the townspeople have gathered here for protection and support. Some of the younger men gather their courage, acting out their hostility through drinking or boasting, but the hopeless looks in their neighbor's eyes deflates them. The PCs may be able to recruit 2d10 1st level Commoners to help them here. All of the townspeople with any martial skills that were once part of the militia are all gone now.

A Spot check (DC 20) reveals that one man looks as if he's been drinking since dawn. He is Molich, the town cobbler. He grows increasingly agitated if there is any talk about what happening in the town. At some point, Molich is unable to restrain himself and launches into a drunken tirade, his eyes wild and his voice slightly unhinged.

"You all ain't seen what I seen! You're all dead! But that ain't the end. No! I know! Because I seen Dekis last night! I heard something over at Dekis' last night. I... weren't sleeping. I peeked out the window, and I seen Dekis comin' out! Only it wasn't Dekis no more! He was... his skin was all white, and his eyes were red. And... and he looked right at me! There was no way he coulda seen me, but he did!" He shudders visibly and downs his drink, desperately gulping at every drop. "Then he smiled... walked down the street. He was headed straight up to Watchman's Hill! Only the dead have business up there!"

Molich drinks some more. If the PCs ask him to explain himself, he isn't much help. He merely repeats the same information in a different way.

C. SHEE'NETHA, TOWN HEALER

The unofficial town matriarch is a venerable elf woman named Shee'netha. Her cottage lies somewhat off the center of town. Before long, she will become a victim to the blood wraith's insatiable hunger.

She has been here as long as the town has existed, and she is the only person who knows the truth about what happened. When she was a delicate elf maiden at the tender age of 95, she fell in love with a dashing human ranger named Janis. He was a retainer of the human wizard known as Alstand. She left her own people to join Alstand's company and to be near Janis. In Alstand's company, her skills as a bard increased. When he retired from adventuring life, Alstand founded the town.

Shee'netha and Janis followed him here, marrying each other and bearing a family. Almost 300 years have passed. Janis died when Shee'netha was little more than a girl she still mourns him. Her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren are all dead. Five generations of her descendants have come and gone. It is well known that over a hundred of the town's residents are her direct descendants.

Because of Shee'netha's great age, she seems a morose and distant figure to the short-lived humans. Their reverence for her borders on worship. Consequently, no one ever *talks* to her as a person, so she welcomes any chance for normal conversation. She is partially unaware of the severity of the problem and is only beginning to suspect what is happening. If anyone bothers to tell her the whole story, the truth comes in a flash of insight.

She remembers well the events that brought the blood wraith into existence, and how it was imprisoned in Alstand's tomb. However, few have spoken to Shee'netha of the events, keeping her sequestered from the facts. Those horrible events are not something she wished to speak about before, but she understands the severity of the cause now. She has not left her house since the trouble began, believing herself too old and weak to be of much use against the blood wraith.

She is the only one in town who knows the secret of the *rod of eternal life*. She is terrified of its power. Her friend Amil, another of Lord Alstand's retainers, was the cleric who sacrificed himself to imprison the blood wraith so many years ago. He took the rod with him into the tomb, forcing the blood wraith to remain still until the tomb was sealed. She shudders to think of her old friend sealed in the dark, alone with the blood wraith, waiting for the end. She does not know how he died, but she thinks he inevitably passed out from exhaustion. And the blood wraith then took him.

Use Shee'netha in the story as you see fit — perhaps as a source of information or a gentle hand skilled at healing. She will not actively join the PCs, but she defends herself as best she can.

Shee'netha, Elf Brd6: CR 6; SZ M (humanoid); HD 6d6; hp 20; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+1 Dex, +3 studded leather, *ring of protection* +2); Atks Short sword +4 melee (1d6), dagger +4 melee (1d4), or dart +5 ranged (1d4); SA Spells: SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 19; AL LG. Skills: Alchemy +8, Bluff +9, Climb +1, Intuit Direction +8, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (history) +8, Knowledge (nature) +8, Listen +16, Perform +13, Sense Motive +12. Feats: Alertness, Iron Will, Leadership. Spells: 0: *detect magic, ghost sound, light, mending, read magic, resistance*; 1st: *charm person, cure light wounds, detect secret doors, mage armor*; 2nd: *cure moderate wounds, glitterdust*; 3rd: *delay poison*.

D. TOWN WELL

The town draws all of its water from three wells located in various parts of town.

E. EMPTY HOUSES

All of the empty houses reveal the same information. Spot checks (DC 15) indicate no signs of struggles — no broken doors or windows, no broken furniture, and no spilled blood. The only things out of place are bedcovers lying on the floor, cast aside, unwashed dishes and half-eaten meals.

F. NEW CEMETERY

This graveyard is relatively new. There are no graves here older than fifty years. The PCs may be tempted to explore this cemetery, but there is nothing here relating to current events. However, leading PCs to believe otherwise is acceptable.

G. RUINED WATCHTOWER

All that remains of the watchtower are three stone walls reaching thirty feet high. The interior structure and side building have collapsed into rubble, except for a five-foot wide section of the third floor. It can only be reached with a successful Climb check (DC 20).

H. THE OLD CEMETERY.

See *Watchman's Hill* below.

ALSTAND BY NIGHT

Not long after the sun sets, the undead begin to prowl. The growing army of wights shambles down from Watchman's Hill to do the bidding of the blood wraith. From one-half hour after sunset to one-half hour before sunrise, there is a 75% chance every half-hour that anyone outside encounters 2d4 wights. If any of the townspeople encounter these wights, there is an 80% chance they recognize one or more of the wights as a friend or relative who has recently disappeared. The wights are intelligent enough to use this to their advantage and, while their victim hesitates, capture him for the blood wraith.

In addition to encountering wights, there is a 5% chance every half-hour that anyone outside encounters the blood wraith. The blood wraith does not attack an armed and prepared party unless the odds are in its favor. If attacked in the open without any wights for protection, it flees.

Wight: CR 3; SZ M (undead); HD 4d12; hp 26; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 natural) Atks Slam +3 melee (1d4+1 and energy drain); SA Energy drain, create spawn; SQ Undead; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 12, Con —, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 15; AL LE. Skills: Climb +5, Hide +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +16, Search +7, Spot +8. Feats: Blind Fight.

Blood Wraith: CR 10; SZ M (undead); HD 6d12; hp 46; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Imp Init); Spd 30 ft., fly 60 ft. (good); AC 15 (+3 Dex, +2 deflection) Atks Incorporeal Touch +5 melee (1d4 + energy drain and blood drain); SA Energy Drain, blood drain (1d4 permanent Constitution drain), create spawn; SQ Undead, incorporeal, +2 Turn Resistance, unnatural aura, daylight powerlessness, fast healing 3 (if it has fed); SV Fort +1, Ref +4 Will +6; Str —, Dex 16, Con —, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 15; AL LE. Skills: Hide +14, Intimidate +10, Intuit Direction +6, Listen +12, Search +10, Sense Motive +8, Spot +12. Feats: Alertness, Blind Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative.

WATCHMAN'S HILL

The crest of wind-swept Watchman's Hill looms like a kneeling giant over the town. Its rounded top rests at least a hundred feet above the valley floor. The sides of the hill are steep and rocky. The crumbling remains of the ancient watchtower stand in mute testimony to the march of time, guarding nothing now except the ancient collection of granite stones behind it. The narrow road winds up the hill, switching back to negotiate the steep slope. A rusted fence of wrought iron encircles the graveyard. Little vegetation grows on this stony, wind-blasted heath. A few tufts of wiry grass, moss, and lichen are all that live here. The gravestones are grim, gray reminders of ancient death, their faces weathered by wind and rain. Ancient mausoleums squat among the jutting gravestones, their iron gates sagging on ancient hinges.

The townspeople stopped using the graveyard about a hundred years ago, when they ran out of room for graves. The largest tomb in the graveyard, on the northern end, is Lord Alstand's tomb. A Spot check (DC 15) discovers that there are no graves within about thirty feet of Alstand's tomb. The gravediggers of the time refused to approach any closer to the tomb. They did not know why at the time, but the tomb with its imprisoned blood wraith made them very uneasy.

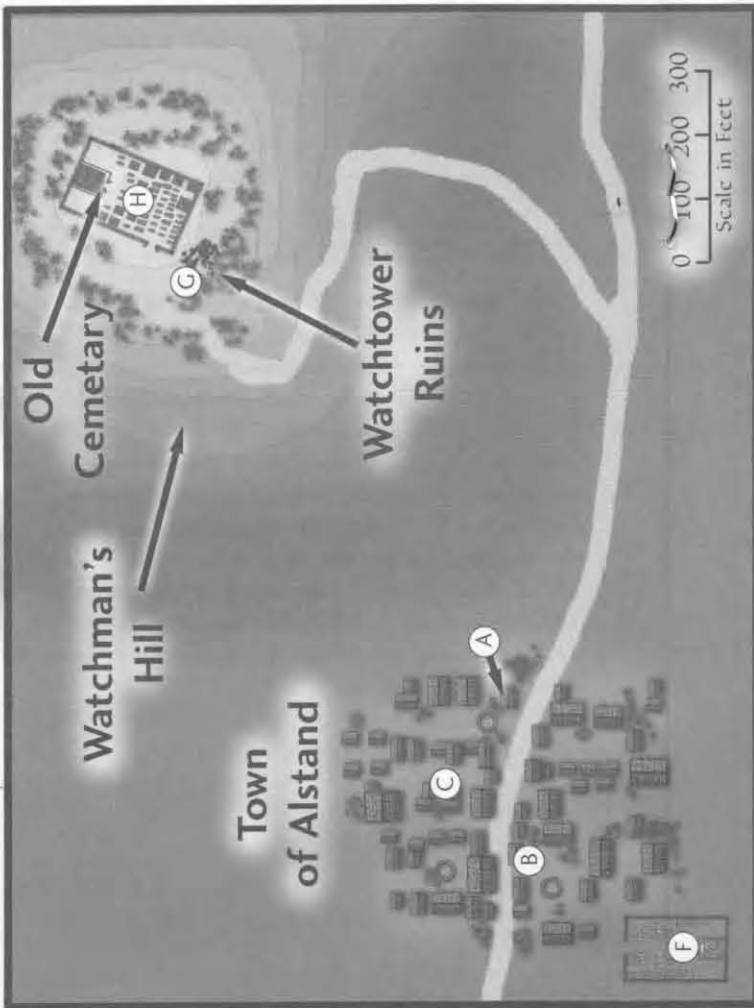
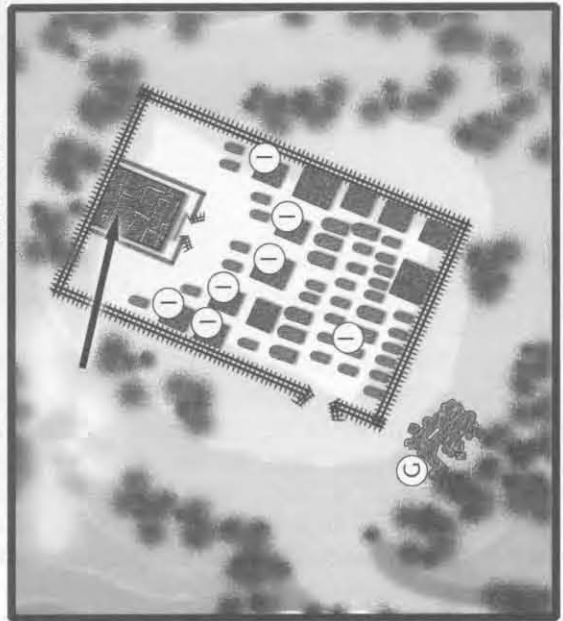
ALSTAND

- A. Dekis' Place
- B. The Old Flagon Inn
- C. Shee'netha, Town Healer
- D. Town Well (unmarked)
- E. Empty Houses (unmarked)
- F. New Cemetary
- G. Watchtower Ruins
- H. Old Cemetary
- I. Wights in Ambush
- J. Tomb Trap
- K. Lord Alstand's Treasure
- L. Lord Alstand's Sarcophagus
- M. Amil's Corpse

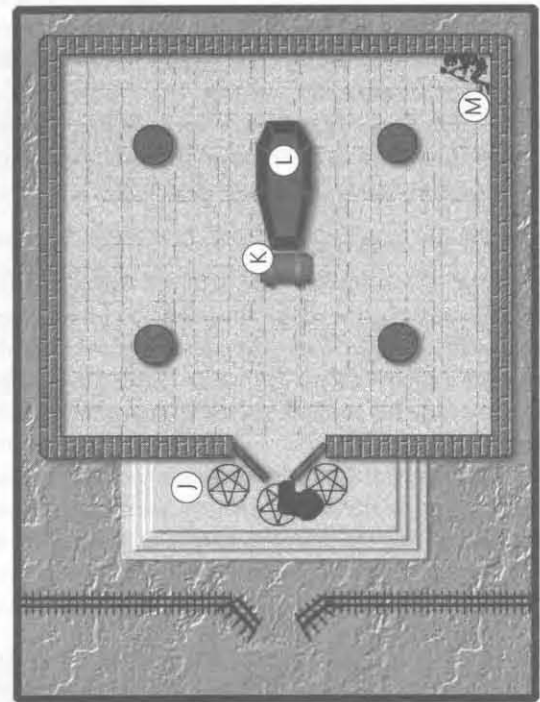


0 30 60 90
Scale in Feet

Old Cemetary



0 100 200 300
Scale in Feet



Lord Alstand's Tomb

0 10 20
Scale in Feet

Before the blood wraith was released, the only people in recent times to go up Watchman's Hill were teenagers looking for a thrill. Town legend made Watchman's Hill a fearful place, where angry parents threatened to leave their children if they were naughty. The town is full of tales of ghosts and strange lights seen on Watchman's Hill. The only person who remembers why Watchman's Hill was shunned is Shee'netha.

Anyone with the Track feat who makes a Wilderness Lore check (DC 15) notices many fresh footprints all around the cemetery.

I. WIGHTS IN AMBUSH

In each of these tombs are 1d4 Wights waiting to ambush anyone entering the cemetery. A close range Spot check (DC 20) on the doors of these crypts reveals that they have been opened very recently. The wights bide their time until there is no chance for their prey to escape before they spring the ambush. The wights in the crypts nearest Alstand's Tomb wait until any intruders are preoccupied with opening the tomb door or even inside the tomb itself. Then they close the doors and trap the intruders inside, allowing the blood wraith to devour them at leisure.

LORD ALSTAND'S TOMB

A large stone mausoleum dominates the northern end of the cemetery. Its granite faces are worn from centuries of wind and storms, but the symbols engraved in the stone still read as clearly as the day they were carved. Every stone block is engraved with the same symbol. An eight-foot, spiked iron fence surrounds the entrance. The iron gate squeals like a tortured soul in the wind, swinging freely. The remnants of a rusty chain hang shattered and useless from the gate latch. Four stone steps lead up to the entrance, a pair of huge iron doors ten feet tall. Each must weigh several tons. Rusty chains lock in place the thick iron bar. Bridging the seam between the two doors is another symbol carved of stone broken down the center. A bronze plaque almost three feet across, green with age is affixed to the left door. On the plaque is an inscription written in archaic Common, "Within these stones lies good and evil. Death to any whom does not recognize balance. Death awaits within all who open these doors."

A Knowledge (Religion) check (DC 15) reveals that the holy symbols are all marks of Pelor, the neutral good sun god. These particular emblems were commonly used three hundred years ago, but have since fell into disuse. Directly before the entrance is a large pool of dried blood, cementing the detritus of mixed dust and decaying plants into a crusty brownish paste. The source of the bloodstain is not apparent.

The massive iron bar holds the doors and a rusty chain and padlock lock the iron bar. The doors are four inches thick, with a Hardness of 10, and 100 hp each. The DC to break them is 30. The lock is DC 20.

J. TRAP

A Spot check (DC 20) reveals something carved in the stone, something mostly obscured by the carpet of detritus. If the carpet is cleared away, three pentagrams are revealed. Rogues who succeed at a Search check (DC 22) discover the deadly trap on the top step. The trap is set to shoot three-foot steel spikes straight up through the points of the pentagrams, into the bodies of whoever is standing on the pentagrams when the trap is activated. As soon as the spikes reach the limit of their movement, they begin to sink back into their apertures.

Spike Trap: CR 5; +10 melee; 2d8/x3 crit; Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 25).

Alternatively, if the pentagrams are stepped on in the proper manner, the trap will be disabled. The two outer pentagrams must be stepped on simultaneously by individuals weighing at least 100 pounds. A Listen check (DC 15) reveals an audible click as the safety latches fall into place. The trap remains disabled this way for one hour, then another click may be heard with a Listen check (DC 15) to indicate that the trap has reset itself. If any weight is otherwise applied to the top step before the trap is disabled, the trap springs.

K. LORD ALSTAND'S TREASURE.

The treasure was entombed with the wizard in a large iron chest. Aside from weighing over four hundred pounds, it is bolted to the floor. The bolts can be removed if the chest is opened and emptied. This chest is also locked (DC 25) and trapped with a deadly poison needle

Needle Trap: CR 2; +8 ranged; 1 hp damage plus Wyvern Poison, Search (DC 22), Disable Device (DC 25).

Inside the chest are an array of fine clothes, stacked on top of a crystal shod *staff of frost*, organized bags of coins (550 pp, 225 gp), a *robe of eyes*, an adamantite dagger, a small velvet pouch of rings (a *ring of evasion*, a *ring of the ram*, and a faulty *ring of shooting stars* unable to use the ball lightning ability), and *dimensional shackles* made for a Huge creature

L. LORD ALSTAND'S SARCOPHAGUS

A heavy stone sarcophagus rests in the middle of the chamber. Four thick stone pillars support the vaulted, web-choked ceiling. The corners of the chamber are thick with cobwebs. The lid and sides of the sarcophagus are engraved with the same symbols as those on the outside the tomb.

The stone lid rests unlocked on the sarcophagus. Inside is what remains of Lord Alstand, little more than a crumbling skeleton. A Spot check (DC 15) reveals the glint of precious metal amidst the loose finger bones — a *ring of wizardry (I)* and a cursed *ring of protection -1*.

M. AMIL'S CORPSE

Here lies the corpse of Shee'netha's old friend, Amil. The corpse is lying almost completely concealed by dusty cobwebs. A Spot check (DC 12) reveals its presence.

If the corpse is spotted, read aloud:

Lying on its side amidst the dusty cobwebs is a gnarled corpse. A breastplate covers its torso, but the chainmail shirt has rusted to dust. The unfortunate man's garments appear to be those of a cleric. A rusted mace lies beside him. The corpse is gripping something in its twisted fists — a two-foot black rod with a gigantic black gem attached to one end. The gem seems to glint even in this low light.

Amil long ago became a wight under the blood wraith's control. He is merely lying in wait to ambush anyone who comes near. He waits until a potential victim touches the rod before he moves, and until then he appears as nothing more than a corpse. He does not attack with the rod because its powers will not work for him, but he does not relinquish it until he is dead for good.

Amil, the Wight: CR 4; SZ M (undead); HD 5d12; hp 35; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Imp Init); Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+1 Dex, +4 natural, +5 breastplate); Atks Slam +3 melee (1d4+1 and energy drain); SA Energy drain, create spawn; SQ Undead; SV Fort +1, Ref +2 Will +5; Str 12 Dex 12, Con —, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 15; AL LE. Skills: Climb +5, Hide +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +16, Search +7, Spot +8; Feats: Blind Fight, Improved Initiative.

ADVENTURE DEVELOPMENT

Allow the atmosphere and events of the adventure to build tension and suspense, little by little, with mounting hopelessness as more and more of the townspeople disappear. Introduce unique NPCs early on and then have them disappear, only to attack the PCs later as wights. A large part of the horror of this adventure lies in the fact that anyone who is killed almost immediately rises again as a wight to attack his former comrades or neighbors. The emotional impact lies in making the PCs care about the townspeople, like Johfig, Molich, and Shee'netha. Portray the townspeople as good folk trapped in a terrible situation, fearing for their lives and the lives of their families. They are not stupid or cowardly or lambs awaiting slaughter. But, they are victims nonetheless and their role in this is to provide the PCs with a certain level of emotion that cannot be captured unless they have a stake in things.

It is the stealth of the blood wraith, along with its immunity to normal weapons that makes it so terrifying. It can strike anyone, anywhere, and no one can see it coming. It uses as many solid objects as it can to cloak its approach. It even travels below ground level and rises up

through floors and ceilings, reaching through beds touch sleeping victims. Imagine the consternation of a PC when he sees an incorporeal hand reaching through a wall toward one of his unsuspecting comrades.

The blood wraith is a very cunning and devious enemy, not a monster of blind, senseless rage. This cunning and intelligence make it all the more dangerous. If it is significantly harmed, it flees to regain its strength, allowing its minions to continue the fight. During the day, it hides in the crypts on Watchman's Hill, waiting to strike again. It does not enter Astand's Tomb except to attack an enemy, as it fears being trapped again.

When the blood wraith realizes there is a new threat in its playground (i.e. the PCs), it takes steps to neutralize them. It first sends 2d6 wights to attack them, and then discreetly watches the fight from a distance to determine the capabilities of the PCs. After it has perceived the PC's strengths and weaknesses, it attempts to split the party into smaller groups by sending two separate bands of wights to abduct some villagers. Both bands of wights pass near enough to the PCs to be noticed. The PCs must choose which group of wights to stop or try to stop both. If the PCs foolishly separate, the blood wraith attacks the weaker of the two groups, with preferences toward any group without a cleric. The wights abandon their screaming victim and attack the PC's along with the blood wraith.

Ultimately, if the PCs prove too much of a problem, the blood wraith lures them up onto Watchman's Hill, where it and its minions attack them en masse.

The exact number of wights existing under the blood wraith's control is largely left up to the GM. This way the GM can more easily tailor the Challenge Rating of this adventure to the power level of the PCs. Another reason is for the GM to control the tension and fear levels of the PCs.

The pace at which the PCs choose to confront the problem greatly affects how the adventure unfolds. They may choose to charge blindly into combat with the unknown, or they may try first to determine the truth about what is happening. The group that chooses the latter method should have more success, because they will be better prepared to deal with what is happening. The PCs may believe at first a vampire is the root of the problem, and this is a great red herring for a devious GM to mislead the PCs. If they go up Watchman's Hill toting bundles of garlic, holy water, and wooden stakes, they are in for a nasty surprise. If they talk to Shee'netha first, they may get a better understanding of what is happening.

However, the longer the PCs wait, the more townspeople die. Every night, 1d10 townspeople are turned into wights. Even if the PCs manage to kill the blood wraith, the wights still exist. The wights simply gain their own free will. Moreover, everyone killed by a wight also becomes a wight, fueling a fire of terror and death that can only end in one of two ways: the extermination of the wights, or the extermination of the town.

NEW MONSTER

BLOOD WRAITH

Medium-Size Undead (Incorporeal)

The blood wraith is a special type of undead creature that can only be created by the legendary *rod of eternal life*. The blood wraith shares qualities of both wraiths and vampires, sustaining itself by feeding on both the blood and the life force of its victims.

Until it has fed on any particular day, it appears much like a normal wraith, only more insubstantial and difficult to see — an incorporeal humanoid form with two beady red eyes. When it succeeds with a touch attack, rivulets of blood are drawn from its victim and into its ghostly shape, seeping like pulsing red veins throughout its form.

COMBAT

Close combat with a Blood Wraith is exceedingly dangerous because of the Blood and Energy Drain attacks.

Blood Drain (Su): Living creatures struck by a blood wraith's incorporeal touch must succeed at a Fort save (DC 14) or suffer 1d4 points of permanent Constitution Drain.

Energy Drain (Su): Living creatures struck by a blood wraith's incorporeal touch must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 13) or suffer 1 negative level.

Create Spawn (Su): Any humanoid slain by a blood wraith becomes a wight in 1d4 hours. Spawn are under the command of the wraith that created them and remain enslaved until its death. They do not possess any of the abilities they had in life.

Unnatural Aura (Su): Animals can sense the unnatural presence of a blood wraith at a distance of 30 ft.

Fast Healing: Each time a blood wraith drains Constitution or levels, it heals 5 points of damage. It cannot exceed its starting hit points in this manner.

Hit Dice: 6d12 (39 hp)	Saves: Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +6
Initiative: +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative)	Abilities: Str —, Dex 16, Con —, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 15
Speed: 30ft., fly 60ft. (good)	Skills: Hide +14 (see below), Intimidate +10, Intuit
AC: 15 (+3 Dex, +2 deflection)	Direction +6, Listen +12, Search +10, Sense Motive +8, Spot +12
Attacks: Incorporeal Touch +5 melee	Feats: Alertness, Blind Fight, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative
Damage: Incorporeal Touch 1d4, energy drain 1 negative level, blood drain 1d4 permanent Constitution drain	Climate/Terrain: Any land or underground
Face/Reach: 5ft. by 5ft./5ft.	Organization: Solitary
Special Attacks: Blood Drain, energy drain, create spawn	Challenge Rating: 10
Special Qualities: +2 Turn resistance, daylight powerlessness, fast healing, incorporeal, Undead, unnatural aura	Treasure: None
	Alignment: Always lawful evil
	Advancement: 7–12 HD (Medium-size)

Undead: Immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep, paralysis, stunning, and disease. Not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, energy drain, or death from massive damage.

Incorporeal: Can be harmed only by other incorporeal creatures, +1 or better magic items, or magic, with a 50% chance to ignore any damage from a corporeal source. Can pass through solid objects at will, and own attacks pass through armor. Always moves silently.

Daylight Powerlessness (Ex): Blood wraiths are utterly powerless in natural sunlight (not merely a *daylight* spell) and flee from it.

NEW MAGIC ITEM

ROD OF ETERNAL LIFE

Major Artifact

Created centuries ago by a powerful necromancer whose name has been thankfully forgotten, the *rod of eternal life* is a horrible—and dangerous—artifact best left alone. The rod appears as a smooth, black, metal shaft about two feet long, with a faceted black sapphire the size of a fist attached by metal fingers to one end. The alignment of the rod is lawful evil. For every week that someone possesses the artifact, he must make a Will save (DC 20) or his alignment changes one step closer to lawful evil. For example, lawful good to lawful neutral to lawful evil, or chaotic good to chaotic neutral to lawful neutral, etc.

It operates very simply. The user strikes the intended living victim with the *rod*, with the intent to do harm. The *rod of eternal life* instantly subjects the victim to the spell, *finger of death*. If the victim dies, the user's effective age is reduced by one year. In addition, the user temporarily gains half the victim's normal hit points and 1 character level. The extra level is lost after 1 full day, and the extra hit points are lost at a rate of 1d6 per day.

Furthermore, there is a 75% chance that the victim is transformed into a blood wraith (see *New Monster on the previous page*). The user controls the blood wraith as long as he holds the rod in his hand. The blood wraith must obey the commands of the wielder, as long as the wraith is not commanded to cause itself harm or by lack of action allow itself to be harmed. The blood wraith may resist those types of commands. If the user ever puts down the *rod* or attempts to harm the blood wraith, the blood wraith is freed and attacks the user.

Any living, sentient being holding the *rod of eternal life* can control whatever blood wraiths currently exist. Line of sight is not necessary and the range is unlimited. If the blood wraith is not currently in sight, the user is aware of its location. The rod does not allow the user to share the perceptions of any blood wraiths. If more than one person is touching the rod, both must make contested Will saves. The winner must make another Will save (DC 20) or immediately attempt to use the rod against the loser.

Caster Level: 16th; *Market Price:* 135,000 gp.

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THE FLESH IS WEAK

Author: Travis Heermann

Art Director and Project Manager: jim pinto

Editor: Dave Lepore, jim pinto, Erik Yaple

Creative Director: Mark Jelfo

Graphic Design: Steve Hough

Illustration and Cartography: Cris Dornaus

Playtesting and Advice: James Sparling, the a-team

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