



*Patreon Adventure Supplement
October 2022*

Blackthorne Woods

*Maps: The Chapel in Blackthorne Woods
The Catacombs of Blackthorne Woods*

Blackthorne Woods

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Patreon *Map of the Month* GM's supplement

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Regional map made using Inkarnate (www.inkarnate.com).

SETTING



Key to the map:

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1 | The Nest of Leeches tavern |
| 2 | Marold's Farm |
| 3 | The town of Harcombe |
| 4 | The village of Little Joy |
| 5 | The Ruined Chapel and Blackthorne Nest |
| 6 | The village of Nighgonne |
| 7 | The village of Brideswell |
| 8 | Church of the Sacrificed Lamb |

Setting description

This supplement is designed to be used in games in which the playable characters are newly initiated members of the vampire nest. The tables and characters can easily be adapted for use with other story formats.

You will have noticed, new ones, the old road outside. Slaughterwalk Way was once used to drove cattle to the market towns and it passes north through Blackthorne Woods, past our chapel. Once heavy with foot and equine traffic, the road has been rendered quiet by our presence and a sweet and threatening darkness has encroached upon the forest. Some still travel this way through necessity, but these days most people who live in the villages to the south take a circuitous route to reach the towns to the north. Unfortunate for us, of course. Easy pickings are few.

The ruined Chapel of the Innocent Blood, with its graveyard and handsome, crumbling chanel house on the western side of the road are an eerie sight for travellers, but of course a welcome one for us. Home.

You would forgive a mortal for wondering if the place were haunted. Many feel a chill as they pass beneath the trees and some catch a fleeting movement in the shadows. Those who fear not ghosts, but vampires, may have a moment longer to effect their escape, may be a little more prepared. But there is nothing we enjoy more than the hunt, of course!

Please, familiarise yourself with the crypt. We are not ones for ostentation here and prefer a more traditional style of nest. To the west lie a network of catacombs over which we only have partial and sporadic control, so I advise you operate there with some caution. Likewise beware that we have had more trouble with the local mortals of late. Other than that, welcome to the Blackthorne Nest!

PLOTS

Story starters

1 Innocent Blood Spilled

Church authorities have recently pasted a notice to the stones of the chapel above the vampire's nest, stating that the Chapel of the Innocent Blood it is to be reconsecrated. Father Mertlin plans to resume services in the chapel to worship the Divine Light as soon as possible. The Church notice appeals for workers of appropriate skill who might volunteer to repair the chapel. It also makes vague reference to dark elements in the woods that need to be repelled.

The Blackthorne Nest is horrified that their quiet chapel and crypt will be overrun with do-gooders and have vowed to stop the Church in its tracks. The newest nest members are put in charge of initiating the defence.

2 Uncivil War

Trouble has been brewing in the Blackthorne Nest for some time. It began with violent arguments that lasted days and has escalated to kill-thefts, coffin damage and mean whispering. Vultuulf and his closest ally Ricimera have fallen out. Factions are forming and most in the nest have picked one side or the other. For Ricimera's part, she desires a more prominent role in the nest and wants to sire new recruits. She aims to raise an army to wage war on the local mortals who wish to see the vampires driven out.

Vultuulf the Almoner has little interest in fighting humans and believes it is more important to secure their home and food supply by living undetected in the woods and feeding sporadically. His ambitions lie in the study of dark magic, that he might rise in the regional vampire ranks, biding his time until he can take Castle Darkspire for himself. Ricimera lauds the aim, but thinks her method provides an easier route. Now it seems they are set to vie for the leadership of the nest and no one will be allowed to sit on the sidelines.

3 Blue Blood

Vultuulf calls a meeting to accuse the newest recruits to the nest of not sufficiently proving their worth. After some discussion, it is agreed that the recruits will undertake a task to bring great honour the Blackthorne Nest.

Tribute is due to be paid to the Great Sire, an ancient and mysterious vampire who lives in Castle Darkspire. The recruits must procure for the Great Sire a special gift of Royal Blood and deliver this to Darkspire alive and ready to consume fresh. Success will secure their place in the nest as well as the favour of the Great Sire. Failure doesn't bear thinking about.

Low level missions and tasks that Vultuulf might ask the vampire PCs to undertake in order that they might prove themselves

- 1 Minions tell us that a farmer, one 'Marold', who owns land near the chapel has decided to clear some trees there that he might grow garlic. Not only will the stench be terrible for us, but local people may buy it and store it in their homes – a barrier of some greatness to our work. Make sure his crop fails.
- 2 After the troubling losses of last spring, of which we do not speak, we have determined that our nest is in need of more thralls. It is essential to us that loyal followers are available to carry out menial tasks around the crypt and outside of it during the daylight. Procure for the nest three new thralls.
- 3 A spy of ours who is making use of the trees to the south has reported that a small group of monks are travelling through the woods. They are currently camped not far from the nest, hoping for the recovery of a sick monk among their number before they resume travel. They would make an excellent feast, but please remember, no diseased meals.
- 4 We keep an eye on a hole of a tavern near the edge of the woods in which a band of vampire hunters is said to meet. The landlord, Gormen Bittersudd, a man of somewhat gothic tastes, is known to sympathise with their cause and enjoys making something of a dark game of the matter. Now we have learned Bittersudd has renamed the tavern in a bid to draw more custom from those interested in the slaughter of unsuspecting creatures of the night. He mocks us with the new name, 'The Nest of Leeches'. Burn the horrid place to the ground.
- 5 The priest of the Church of the Sacrificed Lamb frequently brags that their altar is blessed to be inset with a large reliquary containing the bones of a holy man. It would be most amusing if those bones were stolen and desecrated in a very public way.
- 6 You will have heard much talk about the incident last quarter moon when a victim unfortunately escaped Kathalina's clutches here at the crypt. Ricimera's thrall Knee has reported that this person, one 'Turrence Hendings', is now travelling the local villages, shouting loudly about the presence of 'blood-sucking murderers' and detailing our location. People are starting to listen to the fool. Silence him.

NPCs

Vampires of the Blackthorne Nest (NPCs)

- Vultuulf the Almoner**, the sire of the Blackthorne Nest, was once famed for his acts of charity. During Bizrih, the local Sun Festival, he delivered gifts to those living by his castle. He was a joy, the handsome heir who was kind where his father had been cruel. But one year Vultuulf did not visit his subjects until nightfall. He had spent the day making a pact of darkness with a force old and evil, one who had offered him a chance to see the future. At moonrise, he began knocking upon the doors in his domain, and by morning not a soul remained alive, all drained of their blood. Vultuulf's appetites have lessened over the centuries and he has seen the future as he was promised, but the kind gentleman of his past is long gone. Only a terrifying creature of night remains.
- Ricimera** was the first victim that Vultuulf left alive, turning her into a vampire that he might finally have a companion. A fortune teller in her former life, Ricimera is charming of both face and personality and capable of weaving anyone around her finger. She acts as Vultuulf's second in command, but there have been tensions among them of late, with Ricimera wishing to bring vampires into the nest of her own siring. She has been allowed only minions and has a trio that she calls Knee, Arm and Foot.
- Irbis of Gharqhesban** is the only Blackthorne vampire who was not sired by Vultuulf. He was found wandering in the catacombs where he'd been buried by some locals who thought his desiccated body was that of a corpse. Vultuulf liked him and allowed him to stay. Extremely old and having seen much, he sometimes gets lost in visions of ages long past. Has a minion called Shylvie who keeps him on task.
- Korlath with the Good Teeth**, the twin of Kathalina. They were turned by Vultuulf on the same night as they begged on the streets of their home city. Quiet Korlath was never happy to have become a vampire and hates to harm people, but he will follow his sister anywhere. His anger at Vultuulf over his fate simmers quietly.
- Kathalina of the Soft Voice**, the twin of Korlath. She is the dominant twin and her brother tends to do as she wishes. The pair often head into inhabited areas at night so that Kathalina can trick locals intrigued by her misty eyes. For each of her victims, she tattoos a small star onto her body.
- Benedicta de Lalier**, a girl of noble blood from a good Montchevai family, joined the nest on the night of her presentation to society. Whilst all waited for her to make her entrance, her head was turned by dark-eyed Vultuulf, waiting in the shadows, and she left with him as her father bellowed in horror. She still wears the dress she left in.
- Just** was a soldier found on the road by Ricimera, injured and begging for his life. His skills with a broadsword saved him and the nest enjoys watching him fight travellers before revealing his teeth. An uncouth, blonde-haired country boy.
- Anne Gobberd** was the wife of a farmer killed by Kathalina. Harboured a viciousness, she begged to join the nest and uses a practised fake soft, maternal kindness to lure victims.

Enemies of the vampires (mortals)

- Father Wendel Mertlin** the local priest at the Church of the Sacrificed Lamb, and his regional superior, Bishop Rynch, who regularly call for people to remove the local vampires.
- The Order of the True Stake**, a group of paladins dedicated to rooting out all undead that plague civilisation. The order, which wears very shiny armour, has spread across the world in small houses.
- Valentona de Pergator**, a celebrated vampire hunter never known to miss her quarry. She is also famed for her sleek outfit of werewolf skin and bat leather. Uses a traditional bow, which others have nicknamed The Arc of Hell.
- Michen de Lalier**, the nephew of the vampire Benedicta. He has sworn vengeance against the nest that turned his aunt, following the cause of his grandfather and father before him (who failed to enact any punishment, despite dedicating their lives to such). Now in his 60s, he will never give up.
- The Guild of Merchants** who are sick of the dangers of the road through the woods and have agreed to have it made safe, raising funds to hire mercenaries to secure the route.
- The Flaming Pitchforks**, a vigilante group who travel town to town, enjoying the fawning hospitality heaped upon them at local taverns before heading out into the night to slay a vampire or two. They have been unsuccessfully seeking members of the Blackthorne Nest for many months and are getting frustrated.

Innocent people who might be travelling through Blackthorne Wood

- Lenart Fulwin**, a finely dressed young man who gathers nuts here in the autumn that he coats in pastel-tinted sugars to delight guests at his masked soirees.
- A party of inexperienced explorers: Gooseborne, a ranger; Fortune Amy, a bard; Stagglaw, a barbarian; and Swiftillitha, an Elf rogue. They are camping in the wild for the first time.
- Sir Dauncey Hamberd** (on horseback) and his servant Bellamy (on foot). Dauncey is hunting the famed Blood Stag.
- Stokely Sparrow**, a forlorn, penniless poet, searching for dark inspiration in the woods.
- Millicentia Graceflower**, a young noblewoman who has run away from her family to avoid getting married. She is hiding in the old ruined chapel.
- Oswyn**, an itinerate monk who is preaching to the birds of the forest. He believes this brings him closest to the purity that the Gods intend for his heart. His habit is wet from dragging in the mud.
- Gianozzo and Giuliano**, rural merchants travelling to the city to trade the huge jars of olives that are on their cart.
- Corlina de Ghy**, a scholar who is visiting the ruined churches to record their architectural details.

AROUND BLACKTHORNE



The woods – set dressing (see numbered map)

- 1 A white raven sits on a high, gnarled branch. Its eyes are milky with blindness, yet it seems to follow movement.
- 2 This crumbling tomb is covered in a handsome black moss. When pressed, the plant seems to bleed a dark red blood.
- 3 This small tomb stinks with a pungent odour of decay. A careful search reveals the source to be a strange rotting book, bound in unknown leathers. Its pages are scrawled with curses and the names of local people.
- 4 This structure was once a charnel house, but it stands forlornly now, free of bodies. Someone has recently daubed the wall with crude graffiti of a seemingly religious nature. The markings feature strange symbols and glyphs.
- 5 The bark of an old broad oak is split to the height of 8ft, the interior dark and hollow. A whisper can be heard coming from inside it. The vampires call this The Dark Oracle and claim it prophesises things of terror.
- 6 The top boughs of this tree are dark with the furry bodies and leathery wings of hundreds of roosting bats. A cheering sight, were it not for the thick and slippery layer of guano beneath.
- 7 Beneath a thin layer of moss and leaf mulch is a useful mound of human bones. Of varying condition, some are clearly recent whilst others have been there for years.
- 8 Stringed windchimes hang from the ruined columns. Made from scraps of metal, stone and bone, they make an eerie and beautiful sound as they sway in the breeze.
- 9 Wisps of glowing blue mist dance in this part of the wood, fading away and appearing again a little further away. They seem to goad the observer to follow them.
- 10 The altar is notable for its condition. Whilst the rest of the church is stained with algae, the stone is clean, maintained by the vampires who enjoy using it for the odd dark ritual.

Things that might live in the neighbouring catacombs and threaten The Blackthorne Nest

- 1 **Ghouls**
The ghouls that live in the ossuary grow restless. No longer content just to gnaw the ancient bones, they wish for more. It is rumoured that a Ghoul King has risen amongst them and is driving their people to great change.
- 2 **Bandits**
A group of bandits that have started operating in the woods have moved into the old catacombs, unaware of the vampire crypt. As they try to establish a more permanent base here, their criminal activity is scaring travellers from using the road.
- 3 **Spiders**
A horde of spiders are nesting in the catacombs. Hundreds of spiders of every size now infest each tunnel and chamber. Vying for space, some have begun to move into the crypt, spinning their webs across the corridors.
- 4 **Necromancer**
With great excitement, a necromancer has discovered the catacombs and the vast number of bones within. Rischarde is visiting the catacombs ever more frequently, slowly reanimating the bones for his own nefarious purpose. Careless, he has left so many skeletons wandering around that they have started to stumble into the crypt.
- 5 **Kobolds**
A tribe of kobolds have occupied the catacombs in order to harvest the bones there. Collecting them to sell to a city pharmacist, their noisy and obvious presence is a risk to the security of the neighbouring crypt.
- 6 **Acids**
The catacombs have always been a damp place. Now, these conditions have attracted a number of slimes and oozes. Their acidic secretions build and pose a real danger - the stone tombs in the crypt will be eaten away.