

THE ALTAR OF BLOOD

5TH EDITION ADVENTURE

THE END OF THE WORLD IS HERE, DEATH AWAITS

MONKEYDM

THE ALTAR OF BLOOD

THE ALTAR OF BLOOD IS AN ADVENTURE DESIGNED FOR 4-6 LEVEL 17 CHARACTERS FOR USE WITH THE 5TH EDITION RULESET.



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Plot Hook

You are some of the strongest adventurers the world has ever seen, but recently you have found yourself on a short break. The world is mostly safe, ever since you've dealt with the Defiled Box. That is, of course, until a shadowy figure appears before you.

CHAPTER 1. A DEAL WITH... A MESSENGER?

In which the players meet a shady figure that seems to have a common cause.

1.1. MERCURIAS, THE MESSENGER

Read this:

'As strong and wealthy adventurers, it is not often you get to rest your head and enjoy the spoils of your labour. Not a day goes by that someone doesn't ask for you to aid in defending against pesky gnolls or murder the head of a corrupt religious movement. It is, for lack of a better word, a thankless job, but a 24/7 job. But not today! Today, you enjoy your well-earned holiday on the coast, sipping calmly by the beach. Not in a long time have you felt so relaxed! For the first time in forever, you have time to think back on your accomplishments, enjoy a drink with your companions. Boy, what adventurers have you had! But none today.'

If you are playing this as a one-shot and not within a pre-existing campaign, give the players a few short minute to introduce their characters, maybe even improvise a few reasons as for why they banded together. If this is instead as part of a campaign, allow the players a little downtime. Once you feel they have exploited their few minutes of respite, proceed with the adventure.

Read this:

'But, as you are calmly enjoying the celebration of your success, you see the sun dim. Shadows begin to engulf it ever so briefly. Out of panic, you hurry to your feet, only to see the shade around you coalesce into a singular, ever-shifting form, built of shadow and ash, that changes between various races and sizes, before eventually settling. Before you stands a beautiful human man, dressed in an expensive suit, a bright smile on his face and a large parasol hiding him from the sun. "Well... just the adventurers I was looking for. Greetings. I am Mercurias. It is a pleasure to meet you." The figure takes a theatrical bow, showing a brief smirk. He then looks down at the sand on his boots and sighs in disappointment. "Sand", he mumbles. "Coarse and it gets everywhere". He shakes his boots, before finally turning his head back towards the adventurers.'

The figure quickly introduces themselves as Mercurias, a messenger to a greater demon of shadow with a proposition for the party. Though they may be inclined to attack him, due to his demonic nature, he will remain at a distance and speak gallantly, expressing that he means them no harm.

MERCURIAS

Information: Though he will try to appear weak and a simple messenger, Mercurias is smart, sly and charismatic. He only plays the part of a fool. If asked who he works for, he will only say that he works for a powerful demon "whose name it would be uncouth to say". He will be as cordial as possible, but he will also strongly imply the party move off the beach, because he hates it.



Mercurias will quickly explain that his employer has recently heard of cultists who are trying to summon the avatar of an ancient plague: Blood.

GM NOTE: If this party has had previous interaction with the 10 plagues or has even ran the **Defiled Box mini-adventure**, Mercurias will say that this cult has found that with a strong enough sacrifice, an avatar of the Blood Plague may be summoned. And this is to be avoided at all costs.

Mercurias will say that although he and his employer are most certainly evil, they have their own reasons for wanting this ritual to be stopped. If players wish, they may make a **DC 20 (Wisdom) Insight check** at any point during the discussion. If successful, they will discern that Mercurias is keeping his cards close to his chest, but he is indeed truthful and has no outside motive. Players may also make a **DC 18 (Intelligence) Investigation check** to look over Mercurias, noticing he looks vaguely... semi-transparent and his parasol seems to be made of shadowy tendrils when one focuses on them. If asked about this, he will openly say that this is an illusory outfit.

He will continue the discussion by saying that if they do help, his master will make sure to never harm anything they love or any place they might want to protect, in addition to a powerful monetary reward. He will however not disclose his master's full identity. If persuaded or pressured with a **DC 25 (Charisma) Persuasion or Intimidation check**, he will only mention a title of his, that being He Who Watches.

Players may also attempt to discern his master's identity by making a **DC 30 (Intelligence) Religion check**. If they have received the title from Mercurias by pressuring or persuading him, they may make this check at advantage. On a success, they will remember that He Who Watches is a demon of shadow in darkness strong enough to rival demi-gods. He is particularly known for elongated plans and schemes.

GM NOTE: In the event that players are strongly hostile to Mercurias, either due to his demonic nature or by remembering who is his employer, Mercurias will attempt to persuade him by fact. He will form a small cloud of shadow in front of him, showing a distant altar on a mountaintop. You should also try to make hints towards the players to go in this direction.

With a deal being struck, Mercurias will tell the players they are to meet him at the mountains about a day away from town, as that is where the cultists' altar is situated. Before leaving, he will heavily discourage teleportation, as strong magics are likely to be needed in dispatching of the cultists. You may proceed to the next chapter.

GM NOTE: It is entirely possible that the players, knowing the immediacy of such a ritual, will wish to teleport to the altar. In case the teleportation isn't perfectly on-point, proceed to chapter 2. If the teleportation is perfect, then proceed to chapter 3, yet introduce the 3 **bloodbound** into the battle that would otherwise appear in chapter 2. This is sure to make the encounter difficult enough to either satisfy your player's combat needs or even force them to retreat. If they retreat back through the mountain, follow back through chapter 2 (without adding any additional **bloodbound**), then onto chapter 1.3., while describing a chase sequence. If instead they teleport away, have them devise a new plan to strike once again at another date.

1.2. THE MOUNTAIN PATH

Read this:

'Having been guided by the demon Mercurias, you find your way towards the distant mountain, arriving at the bottom of it within a day's time, whereupon you see Mercurias calmly adjusting his clothes. He looks at you, then bows, and you notice him emerge out of the shadow 60 feet up the mountain. You hear him shouting from above "Shall we? Time is of the essence. Also, we're going underground for the most part. These mountains have quite a few... aerial predators." As he says that, you hear an everdistant shriek, only to notice a large birdlike creature watching from a large nest above. He smirks down towards you. "The best place to try to summon a Plague is a mountain defended by deadly birds, right? Keep low. I'll see you soon!" He then gestures towards a nearby tunnel, which looks expertly crafted, and proceeds to vanish in shadow.'

Any character may attempt a quick **DC 17 (Intelligence) Investigation or History check** when examining the stone of the tunnel. On a success, they will realise it seems to be of celestial design.

Once the players begin their journey in the tunnel, they must proceed through 2 encounters, before finally arriving at their next checkpoint alongside Mercurias. Have one of the players roll 1d4, then proceed to the following area. Once that encounter is finished, have them roll one more. If they roll the same encounter twice, have them reroll the second time.

Once two areas are complete, you may proceed to the next chapter.

AREAS OF THE TUNNEL

1 - THE MIRRORED ROOM

Read this:

'Within short time of your travel, you find yourself in a large room, anointed by a single mirror and nothing else.'

Players may attempt to make a **DC 16 (Intelligence) Investigation or (Wisdom) Perception check** to examine the room. On a success, they make out faint magical runes on the walls, but nothing too important. If they cast *detect magic*, the mirror seems to give off a mix of divination and illusion. A creature looking directly into the mirror may attempt to make a **DC 18 (Intelligence) Investigation check** to look within the reflection, noticing that while looking through the mirror, the faint magical runes glow. In celestial, the runes say "Those without vanity may always step into the future."

In order to solve the puzzle, the players must step backwards towards the mirror, at which point they will find themselves going through it and in an identical chamber, only they are now looking straight at the mirror and the back of the chamber continues into a tunnel.

2 - UNWANTED GUESTS

Read this:

'Not too far off from where you find yourself beginning to ascend the mountain, you notice the tunnels are broken up, as a large cave-in seems to have formed. Rocks cover the only possible pathway further upwards.'

The pathway is covered with rocks, so the players must make **3 DC 18 (Strength) Athletics checks** to remove parts of the rock. Upon removing 1 stack, characters with a passive Perception above 15 will notice goo on the rocks. Upon removing 2 stacks, they will begin to see teeth poking out. Upon removing the last stack, they will see a purple worm, dead, jotted partway into the tunnel. They must carve through its body with normal attacks. The body of the worm has 30 hit points and an AC of 9. Upon carving a whole through it, acid will spill out. All creatures within the tunnel must make a **DC 16 Dexterity saving throw** or take 6d6 acid damage. After that, they may proceed.

3 - ANCIENT ALLEY

Read this:

'As you proceed, the tunnel extends into a large, alley-like chamber, adorned by 4 dwarvish statues with large axes staring down the main alleyway about every 10 feet or so.'

Ask for a marching order. Upon walking within range of the dwarvish statues, which is the only way forward, the axe will smash down. The first creature in the marching order must make a **DC 17 Dexterity saving throw** or take 4d10 slashing damage and 2d8 bludgeoning damage. After that, the trap will take 30 seconds to reload. Each statue can be disarmed from the side of it by making a **DC 18 (Intelligence) Investigation check**. The players may swap out their marching order at any point.

4 - THE UNDERGROUND MEADOW

Read this:

'The tunnel continues upwards for a good 200 feet or so, until you find it leads up into a spiral staircase. One by one, you proceed up the staircase, only to find yourself in a very weird chamber. A large room, with its floor painted green and 5 intricate flower-like statues built all around. A sort of artificial, underground meadow of sorts. You also notice, at the side of the chamber, a well-like structure, near which rest by two buckets.'

Once the players step past the staircase and into the room, the flowers will begin to spew gas and the doors forward and backward will close. In 1d4 turns, the entire room will be filled with a *cloudkill* spell.

In order to stop the gas, they must either destroy or water each flower. Each flower has 14 AC and 20 hit points. If they approach the well, they will see they can take out water. The water can be taken out with a **DC 18 (Strength) Athletics check**, as the cable and main bucket are both made of heavy steel. Once water is brought up, it may be spewed upon a flower, at which point players will hear a click, as runes begin to glow and the flower stops spewing gas. Once all flowers have been taken care of, the door forward opens once more.

1.3. TOWARDS YOUR DESTINY

Read this:

'After your brief, yet mildly tumultuous journey throughout the underground path, you find yourself met with the seemingly unharmed Mercurias, who awaits you silently on a patch of grass. He sees you emerge and arrive at his location, at which point he friendly waves his hand, then makes a hush gesture, pointing not too far from him. As you approach ever so stealthily, he begins to speak. "Not too far off, a hill away or so, is a small bridge, passing by a waterfall. It seems to be guarded by three boring guards. Take them out quickly and stealthily, then we'll pass on by. The water is, luckily, still water, so that means the plague is not yet released onto the world. Shouldn't be an issue at all. Onward, towards your destiny!" He then nods his head and vanishes back into the shadows.'

Bring the players to map 1. The three guards are actually shapeshifted **bloodbound**, who are currently on watch. All characters passing within their watch area must make a **DC 18 (Dexterity) Stealth check** to dodge being seen. If any character is seen, the bloodbound initiate guard. Proceed to the next chapter.

If they sneak behind them, they will get a surprise attack, but will quickly notice that all their attacks on these otherwise normal-looking guards don't seem to take them out. The guards will then cackle loudly and return to their original form, ready to attack and kill them. Proceed to the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2. BLOOD PROBLEMS

In which the party fights with evil beasts and run from deadly creatures.

2.1. BLOODBOUND GUARDS

Read this:

'Without a single additional second of waiting, the three guards quickly shift into what seem to be large, skinless creatures, constantly dripping in blood, as if bleeding out, and yet they look quite healthy. The aberrant creatures turn their heads towards you, with large, lipless smiles. "More blood sacrifices for our lord!" They ready their claws and weapons. Roll for initiative!'

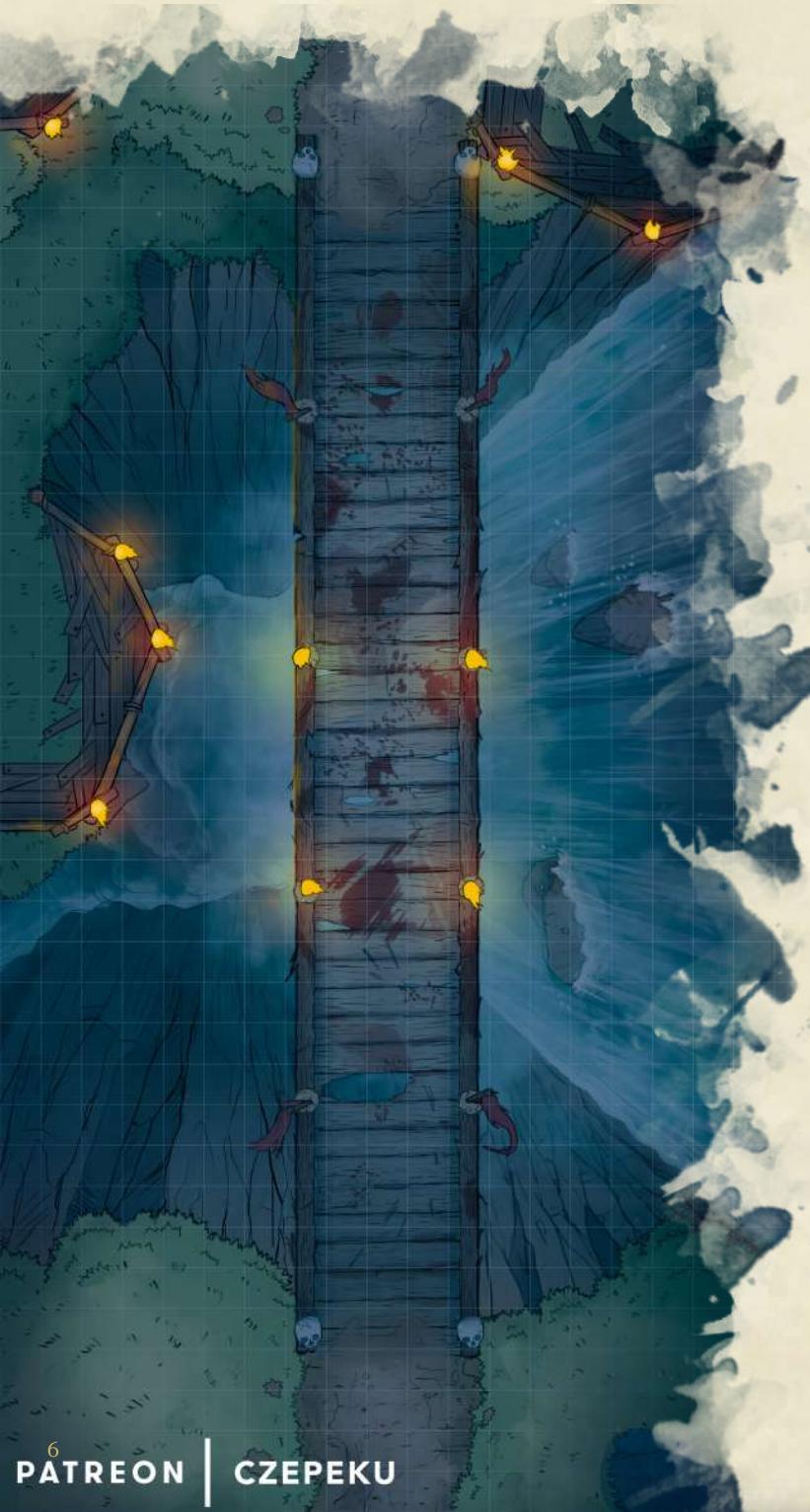
The party must now deal with the 3 **bloodbound**. If the Bloodbound are ever tossed off the bridge and into the water, they will dilute, and yet infest the water, taking 4d8 necrotic damage (that they cannot resist) and spawning 1d4 **bloodcoilers** that begin to also attack the party.

When the fight is finished, you may proceed to the next chapter.

MAP CREATED BY [CZEPEKU](#)

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MAP 1: THE BRIDGE



2.2. THE RELEASE

Read this:

'As you lay waste to the last of your bloodied foes, you draw in a quick breath, only to hear a distant clap. Not an excited clap by any means, but the type of clap given nobles at the opera. Still underneath his parasol, Mercurias gestures past the bridge. "Shall we? Not much more and we will arrive at our destination." With a quickened, yet gentle step, he turns around, only for you to notice a swift change. You notice as slowly, from above, what used to be a flow of water turns redder... and redder, until the flow seems to be all blood. Then, you witness as the ground begins to break and shift. The bodies of the bloodbound you had just killed, they raise to their feet, and you notice as from outside of the waterfall, spirits and undead emerge in quick order. 5, 10, 20, 30. Undead come out rushing. At this point, Mercurias turns towards you with a scared look. "No more time, we need to RUN. These are not our target. I'll take care of them, but we need to kill the plague before it does any more harm." And so you head on.'

2.3. THE MARCH OF SPIRITS

Players will now enter a chase sequence of sorts, as they weave through the mountain, trying to dodge the multitude of spirits rushing after them. They will have to perform a few subsequent checks, until they finally arrive at their destination. For the entire duration, Mercurias will be using his shadowy powers to throw barriers of darkness into the spirits, slowing their movement as best as he can.

GM NOTE: Be sure to reward creative problem solving in this sequence, allowing players to either gain advantage, lower DCs or even skip checks altogether if they find good enough solutions.

First, read this:

'You begin to rush forward, one by one, as fast as you can, until you arrive at a ledge of sorts. You begin having to walk on the side, back against the mountain, as spirits rush as fast to catch up to you.'

All players must make a **DC 17 (Dexterity) Acrobatics check** to pass by quickly. On a failure, the spirits bite into them, dealing 4d10 necrotic damage. Creatures damaged in this way have their hit point maximum reduced by the same amount.

Second, read this:

'You arrive at an extension in the ledge, allowing you to continue to run quickly, and you notice Mercurias, on a platform above you, using shadowy tendrils to pull rocks down onto the undead. You will have to dodge the miniature avalanche of sorts he is causing in order to proceed.'

All players must make a **DC 18 (Wisdom) Survival check** to find a proper route to follow to dodge both the rocks and the undead. On a failure, the undead catch up and scratch them, dealing 5d10 necrotic damage. Creatures damaged in such a way must make a **DC 15 Constitution saving throw** or be poisoned for the next minute.

Last, read this:

'With quick speed you dodge and weave, as Mercurias breaks the herd with a well-placed array of rocks. Behind you, the spirits seem to have returned, while only a few stragglers remain. Mercurias, noticing this, leads you towards a miniature break in the pathway, wherefrom you will have to jump to finally be safe of this threat.'

All players must make a **DC 19 (Strength) Athletics check** to find a proper route to follow to dodge both the rocks and the undead. On a failure, the undead catch up and scratch them, dealing 6d10 necrotic damage. Creatures damaged in such a way must make a **DC 15 Constitution saving throw**. On a failure, they can't regain hit points for 1 minute.

CHAPTER 3. THE RITUAL

In which players finally fight the blood plague.

3.1. FIGHT

Read this:

'With the spirits off your tail, the snarky Mercurias, still with one hand on his parasol, leads you to the top of this mountain, whereupon you arrive in front of a large, bloodied altar. In front of it, a singular figure, with a crown of thorns on its head and a deathly look to it... It is the plague of Blood. Mercurias bows his head and disappears in shadows, leaving you alone. Roll initiative.'

The adventurers will now fight **Blood, the 1st Plague**. Upon defeating it, proceed to the next chapter.

LAIR ACTIONS

On initiative count 20 (losing initiative ties), Blood takes a lair action to cause one of the following effects; Blood can't use the same effect two rounds in a row:

- Coagulated blood erupts from a point on the water Blood can see within 120 feet of it, creating a 20-foot-high, 5-foot-radius geyser. Each creature in the geyser's area must make a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw, taking 21 (6d6) necrotic damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.
- Waves shake the lair in a 60-foot radius around Blood. Each creature other than Blood on/in the water in that area must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d12 bludgeoning damage and be knocked prone.
- Water wraps around Blood and teleports him to anywhere he wishes to above the water, 120 feet from his starting point.

CHAPTER 3.2. END

As the adventurers defeat Blood, its crown of thorns will drop onto the ground. In the brief moment that they catch their breath and are not intently looking at it, Mercurias will pick it up, before bowing and thanking the adventurers for their aid. He will then mention they will meet again... very soon. Then, he will make sure he is out of range for a counterspell and make his exit by disappearing in shadows using a *plane shift* spell. Until they meet again... They've been fooled.

MAP CREATED BY [CZEPEKU](#)

MAP 2: THE ALTAR



BLOOD COILER

Large elemental, chaotic evil

Armor Class 13

Hit Points 58 (9d10 + 9)

Speed 30 ft., swim 90 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	16 (+3)	13 (+1)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)

Damage Resistances necrotic; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical weapons

Damage Immunities poison

Condition Immunities exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

Senses blindsight 30 ft., passive Perception 10

Languages Deep Speech

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Bloodtied. The bloodcoiler dies if it goes further than 500 feet from the water or bloodbound it originated from. In addition, a creature takes 10 (3d6) necrotic damage at the start of each of its turns while grappled by a bloodcoiler.

Actions

Coil. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 13 (3d6 + 3) necrotic damage. If the target is Medium or smaller, it is grappled (escape DC 18) and pulled 5 feet toward the bloodcoiler. Until this grapple ends, the target is restrained, the bloodcoiler tries to drown it, and the bloodcoiler can't constrict another target.



BLOODBOUND

Medium aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)

Hit Points 170 (20d8 + 80)

Speed 0 ft., fly 60 ft. (hover)

STR **DEX** **CON** **INT** **WIS** **CHA**

20 (+5) 15 (+2) 19 (+4) 15 (+2) 10 (+0) 16 (+3)

Saving Throws Dex +6, Con +8

Skills Arcana +6, Perception +4

Damage Resistances acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder

Senses blindsight 60 ft., darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 14

Languages Common, Deep Speech, telepathy 60 ft.

Challenge 10 (5,900 XP)

Shapechanger. The bloodbound can use its action to polymorph into a Small or Medium humanoid, or back into its true form. Its statistics, other than its size, are the same in each form. Any equipment it is wearing or carrying isn't transformed. It reverts to its true form if it dies.

Innate Spellcasting. The bloodbound's innate spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 15, +7 to hit with spell attacks). The bloodbound can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *detect magic, detect thoughts, invisibility (self only), mage hand, major image*

2/day each: *fear, fireball, fly, tongues*

1/day each: *cloudkill*

Magic Resistance. The bloodbound has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. The bloodbound's weapon attacks are magical.

Regeneration. The bloodbound regains 20 hit points at the start of its turn if it has at least 1 hit point.

Actions

Multiattack. The bloodbound makes three attacks: one with its bite and two with its claws or greatsword.

Bite (Bloodbound Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 9 (1d8 + 5) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Claws (Bloodbound Form Only). *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (1d10 + 5) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.

Greatsword. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +9 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 12 (2d6 + 5) slashing damage plus 7 (2d6) necrotic damage.



BLOOD - THE FIRST PLAGUE

BLOOD

Medium aberration, chaotic evil

Armor Class 18 (natural armor)
Hit Points 276 (24d8 + 168)
Speed 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
24 (+7)	14 (+2)	24 (+7)	22 (+6)	18 (+4)	24 (+7)

Saving Throws Dex +9, Con +14, Wis +11
Damage Resistances necrotic
Damage Immunities poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks
Condition Immunities poisoned
Senses truesight 120 ft., passive Perception 14
Languages —
Challenge 22 (41,000 XP)

Magic Resistance. Blood has advantage on saving throws against spells and other magical effects.

Magic Weapons. Blood's weapon attacks are magical.

Leeching Blows. Whenever Blood deals piercing or slashing damage with his Bite or Claw, he recovers a number of hit points equal to half the damage dealt. If Blood takes more than 25 points of radiant damage in a round, this trait doesn't function at the start of the Blood's next turn.

Unholy Walk. Blood is permanently under the effect of the *water walk* spell, in addition on each of its turns, Blood can use a bonus action to take the Dash or Disengage action.

Innate Spellcasting. Blood's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 22). Blood can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

At will: *bestow curse*, *blight*
2/day each: *circle of death*, *harm*

Actions

Multiattack. Blood makes three attacks: one with its bite, two with its claws.

Bite. Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 22 (4d6 + 8) piercing damage. The target must succeed on a DC 21 Constitution saving throw or become poisoned. While poisoned in this way, the target can't regain hit points, and it takes 21 (6d6) poison damage at the start of each of its turns. The poisoned target can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of its turns, ending the effect on itself on a success.

Claw. Melee Weapon Attack: +14 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit:* 21 (3d8 + 8) slashing damage.

Legendary Actions

Blood can take 3 legendary actions, choosing from the options below. Only one legendary action option can be used at a time and only at the end of another creature's turn. Blood regains spent legendary actions at the start of its turn.

Movement. Blood moves up to his full movement speed, without triggering attacks of opportunity.

Bite. Blood makes one bite attack

Crucify (costs 2 actions). Blood chooses 1 creature within 120 feet of him. It must succeed a DC 22 Strength saving throw or be attached to an immaterial cross that emerges from the ground below it and impale it with spikes through their palms and soles. It takes 4d10 magical piercing damage and is restrained, and take that damage again at the end of each of its turns. A restrained creature can use an action to repeat the save, escaping on a success.

A flying creature has disadvantage on the first save, and if it fails, falls to the ground with the cross.

THANK YOU !

A big thank you to the reddit community, as well as all of those who follow and support me, without you I couldn't have brought this project to life.

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Some art by Amanda NP,
Some art by Jacob e. Blackmon, used with permission

Maps created by [CzePeku on Patreon](#).

And now onto the next project...

Cheers !

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A MASSIVE THANK YOU TO ALL MY PATRONS !