

DUNGEON DELVE SIDE QUEST #3
NIGHT OF THE DEMON-DOLLS
by R. Nelson Bailey

A FIRST EDITION ADVENTURE FOR 5–8 CHARACTERS LEVELS 2–4



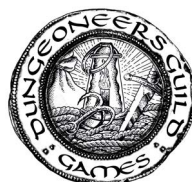
Death stalks under cover of night! In Gravoia, someone or something is murdering the town's elders with ruthless efficiency. These phantom slayers have done their sinister work and then vanished into the night. Surely, evil sorcery must be at work! Some townsfolk suggest that a black magician, bent on vengeance, is responsible for these wicked deeds. Can your party of adventurers uncover the mysterious killer and save the town's leaders from impending doom?

The NIGHT OF THE DEMON-DOLLS module includes town and dungeon settings designed for a party of low-level characters to investigate and explore. It features comprehensive maps and encounter descriptions for the Game Master, along with three new monsters, three new magic items, and six new spells for use in your campaign.

DUNGEON DELVE SPECIAL adventures by Dungeoneers Guild Games are classic-style modules designed to fit into any campaign for the Advanced 1st Edition game. With a little effort, they can easily be adapted to most fantasy role-playing games, including the Advanced 2nd Edition game, the original game, the BECM1 ("Basic") game, and most old-school renaissance (OSR) role-playing systems.

© 2025 Dungeoneers Guild Games. All rights reserved.

First printing.



ISBN 979-8-3507-1320-6
ISBN 979-8-3507-1321-3 (E-book)

1013

DUNGEON DELVE SIDE QUEST #3 NIGHT OF THE DEMON-DOLLS

Night of the Demon-Dolls is an adventure module for 5 to 8 characters of levels 2 to 4 (approximately 16 total character levels). The **player characters (PCs)** must investigate a series of murders that have occurred in the town of Gravoia. A trail of clues soon leads them to an abandoned countryside villa outside the town. The sinister mastermind behind the murders lairs there with his foul minions. This module does not favor any particular class or race; a party with an even mix of both provides the optimal conditions for player success. At least one party member should possess a magical weapon.

Introduction

In **Night of the Demon-Dolls**, the party of adventurers investigates a series of linked murders targeting Gravoia's council of elders (**PART 1**). In this prosperous town of 7,400 residents, seven prominent citizens sit on the council. A week ago, someone brutally murdered one of the elders. Another, a respected cleric, was killed in the same manner last night (AREA A). Drawn into the mystery, the party investigates further and is led to a poor woodcarver's shop (AREA B). There, they uncover concrete clues revealing the identities of the fiendish assailants—murderous, animated manikins called "demon-dolls." Two shadowy figures had compelled the woodcarver to construct these items at the behest of their wicked master, a magician named Astarbul. The trail leads the party to the lair of Astarbul, located in a purportedly haunted villa outside Gravoia (**PART 2**). While exploring the villa, the party must battle Astarbul's henchmen and foul minions. The PCs must make their way into the villa's dungeon level to locate Astarbul, end his reign of terror, and destroy the demon-dolls he unleashed.

BACKGROUND & NOTES FOR THE GAME MASTER

Six years ago, the townsfolk of Gravoia expelled a magician named Astarbul. Townsfolk accused him of practicing black magic, selling malefic potions, and swindling others with counterfeit magic items. Gravoia's governing body—a seven-member elder council—told the magician that he must stand trial for his crimes or leave town. A petty, vindictive magic-user, Astarbul publicly denounced the elders as frauds and cheats. He vowed to take his revenge upon them in due time. That night, he secretly fled the town.

After wandering for some time, Astarbul settled in a distant town where his infamy was unknown. There, he redoubled his magical studies, delving deeper into forbidden dark arts. He sought out tomes of disreputable occult lore and mastered the art of summoning demons from the lower pits. Astarbul entered a pact with one of these lesser demons. In exchange for a means to gain revenge on Gravoia's elders, the magician vowed to dedicate his remaining mortal years to sowing evil and chaos. The demon showed Astarbul how to create murderous demon-doll constructs. With these malevolent, animated manikins, he now possessed the power to exact vengeance on the seven elder council members who had wronged him. Once he perfected the manufacture of these dolls, he moved into an abandoned villa located a few miles from Gravoia. Here, Astarbul recruited a gang of local miscreants to serve him. Most importantly, he set up a laboratory in the dungeon below the villa. With the help of a destitute woodcarver who produced the manikins, the magician set about animating dozens of the diminutive murder dolls. Once his preparations were complete, Astarbul unleashed the demon-dolls on his foes. By this time, he had already claimed the lives of two elders. Now, the remaining five are next to suffer the scorned magician's vengeance!



This module consists of two parts. In the first section (**PART 1**), the PCs investigate a series of murders in Gravoia. There is no predetermined path for players to follow in this section. Instead, they must discover clues that lead them deeper into the mystery unfolding around the town. This requires players to exercise both initiative and curiosity to keep the adventure moving. The **Game Master (GM)** should monitor the players' progress closely to prevent them from getting stuck. If they reach a dead end with no clear path forward, use the **non-player characters (NPCs)** found in the module to offer clues or advice. These aids, along with the timeline events (see "**Timeline of Events in Gravoia**," pp. 3–4), help maintain the adventure's momentum.

After learning of the demon-doll assassins and their creator, the adventurers set off for the ruined villa located outside Gravoia (**PART 2**). While exploring the villa's two floors, the PCs discover the dungeon level beneath it, where Astarbul resides.

Getting Started

This module provides no prescribed starting hook. Instead, the GM should determine how the player characters become drawn into the investigation. Here are several suggested entry points:

1. By happenstance, the party visits the **Temple of the Blessed Shroud** the day after its head priest, Kasel, is murdered. The senior cleric, Hespria, enlists the party to investigate those who committed this nefarious deed. See AREA A, pp. 4–5, for details.
2. While traveling at night, one or more PCs encounter a group of demon-doll assassins near the **Temple of the Blessed Shroud**. Having just slain Kasel, the evil creatures

flee back to their subterranean lair beneath the town (AREA B7). The demon-dolls attack the PCs, drawing them into the mystery.

3. Fearing for their lives, one or more elder council members—selected by the GM—hire the party to uncover the identity of the murderer. They offer to compensate the PCs for their investigation.

ABBREVIATIONS

The following abbreviations appear throughout this module:

AC = Armor Class; **MV** = Move; **MC** = Maneuverability Class; **HD** = Hit Dice; **hp** = Hit Points; **#AT** = Number of Attacks; **Dmg** = Damage; **SA** = Special Attack; **SD** = Special Defense; **MR** = Magic Resistance; **INT** = monster Intelligence rating; **AL** = Alignment; **L** = Large size; **M** = Medium size; **S** = Small size; **xp** = Experience Point value; **THACO** = the number to hit AC 0; **PsA** = Psionic ability; **C** = chaotic; **L** = Lawful; **E** = Evil; **G** = Good; **N** = Neutral; **S** = Strength; **I** = Intelligence; **W** = Wisdom; **D** = Dexterity; **C** = Constitution; **CH** = Charisma; **CM** = Comeliness; **d** = type of die; **rd./rds.** = round/rounds; **cp** = copper piece; **sp** = silver piece; **ep** = electrum piece; **gp** = gold piece; **pp** = platinum piece

PERSONAGES & EVENTS IN GRAVOA

Gravoa Council Members

The five remaining elders of the Gravoa town council are listed below. Unaware of the danger, each elder has already been marked for assassination by Astarbul.

Rincarolo: Though somewhat dim-witted and naïve, this elder councilman possesses an affable and diplomatic demeanor. Rincarolo also commands Gravoa's modest sized town guard.

Rincarolo, male human, 5th-level fighter: AC 10 (none) or 4 (*chain mail +1*); MV 12"; hp 32; #AT 1; Dmg 1d8+1 *longsword +1*; AL CG; Size M; xp 417; THACO 16; S 13; I 7; W 9; D 14; C 16; CH 14. Rincarolo carries a **long sword +1** and dons a suit of **chain mail +1** only when he anticipates combat.

Zanna: Always well-dressed, she is one of Gravoa's wealthiest and most successful merchants. While reserved and discreet, Zanna has a quick and curious mind.

Zanna, female human, 0-level: AC 10 (none); MV 12"; hp 5; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; AL NG; Size M; xp 12; THACO 20; S 7; I 14; W 15; D 8; C 15; CH 12.

Presnio: Formerly a moderately successful thief, Presnio is now the prosperous and highly regarded owner of the *Inn of the Six Coins*, the largest and best guesthouse in Gravoa. With a blusteringly intense personality, the sociable innkeeper is well respected by his peers.

Presnio, male human, 5th-level thief: AC 6 (*bracers*, Dex); MV 12"; hp 17; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6+1 *short sword +1*; AL N; Size M; xp 477; THACO 19; S 10; I 12; W 9; D 15; C 12; CH 14. Presnio wears **bracers of defense (AC 7)** and carries a **short sword +1**.

lowan: A minor nobleman, lowan is known for his unrepentant hedonism, reckless gambling, and flair for dramatic spectacle. Though callous and self-interested, he wields considerable influence in Gravoa's elite circles.

lowan, male half-elf, 0-level: AC 10 (none); MV 12"; hp 5; #AT 1; Dmg 1d4+1 *dagger of venom*; AL NE; Size M; xp 12; THACO 20; S 13; I 13; W 14; D 10; C 17; CH 11. lowan carries a **dagger of venom**.

Lavio Thyme: Another minor noble, Lavio is friendly, talkative, and spirited. She is intensely yet sincerely dedicated to her religious faith.

Lavio Thyme, female halfling, 0-level: AC 9 (Dex); MV 9"; hp 4; #AT 1; Dmg by weapon type; AL LG; Size S; xp 11; THACO 20; S 8; I 13; W 8; D 15; C 13; CH 9.



Timeline of Events in Gravoa

This module features a timeline of events that unfold during play. Most events involve attempts to assassinate the five remaining elder council members of Gravoa. Unless the party intervenes—by protecting the target or stopping Astarbul and his minions—each assassination proceeds as scheduled below. The day count below begins on the day after Kasel's murder. The group of demon-dolls from AREA B7 (q.v.) carries out all the attacks on the elder council members at night. Most victims display numerous small claw and bite marks, as well as puncture wounds on their bodies. Some show signs of poisoning.

Seven Days Before Kasel's Murder: Rugari—a wealthy merchant—and his wife were slain in their home. Scores of small stab and claw wounds covered both bodies. Their vicious killers harmed neither their children nor their servants, and took nothing of value from their household.

Day 0: The demon-dolls murder Kasel in his quarters at the temple. See **AREA A. Temple of the Blessed Shroud**, pp. 4–5, for details.

Day 1: Kasel's body is discovered, and the PCs become involved in the investigation.

Day 2: Rincarolo is slain at night in his sitting room at home. He drew his sword and fought the attackers, but they ultimately stabbed him to death using daggers or knives. A severed doll arm, clutching a small, poison-coated dagger, is found next to his body.

Day 3: Gravoa's burgomaster, Mancal, discovers a letter at home in the morning. The gloating note reads:

Three fools have died most gruesomely! The unholy lords of the Abyss now gnaw on their wretched souls for all eternity. Four more fools still to come. They cannot escape their miserable fate, for I am the night and the darkness. Doom creeps inexorably forward to engulf them. All of Gravoa shall tremble at the shadow of the one you unjustly scorned and exiled!

Day 5: The merchant Zanna is slain while sleeping in her bed at home. She was garoted, and three tiny crossbow bolts were found embedded in her body.

Day 8: After leaving a gambling house, lowan is murdered in the streets at night along with his two bodyguards. Small

claw and bite marks cover the noble's body, while the bodyguards had their throats slashed. A smashed demon-doll is found lying in the street next to the bodies.

Day 9: Presnio dies in his suite at the *Inn of the Six Coins*. His assailants viciously and repeatedly stabbed, bit, and clawed him to death.

Day 12: The halfling Lavio and her mastiff guardian were slain in her home during the night. The dog slew two demon-dolls before succumbing to its grievous wounds.



Non-Timeline Events

Two events are triggered after the party first visits the woodcarver, Ledri (see AREA B). The exact timing of the events depends on the party's actions and the GM's discretion.

Event 1: After the party visits the woodcarver, the two demon-dolls in the cellar (AREA B6) attack and kill Ledri and his son to ensure their silence. Unless the PCs intervene, the demon-dolls succeed in their task.

Event 2: Shortly after **Event 1**, a group of demon-dolls tracks down the party and ambushes them. The group consists of two dolls per adventurer. Half their number wield hand crossbows, each with four poisoned bolts. This encounter occurs after the party learns of the villa (**PART 2**) but before they arrive.

Investigating the Murders

Allow the players to decide where and how to investigate the murders, including Kasel's. Regardless of their approach, all clues lead to Ledri's workshop (AREA B). If the players reach a dead end, introduce an NPC or an event to direct them toward the next clue. The following investigation threads may be pursued:

- 1. Follow up** on the blue paint smudges found in Kasel's chambers (see "**Murder of the Head Priest**," p. 5). If the PCs investigate the paint source, there is a cumulative 25% chance per day to locate Metaro's shop, the only dyer in town who produces the pigments used to create the bright blue paint. If the PCs inquire with the merchant, he states his most recent customer was a poor woodcarver named Ledri. Every few weeks, Metaro delivers pigments to Ledri's shop and provides the location if asked.
- 2. Inquire** with locals about dollmakers. They report that a woodcarver named Ledri has a shop where he has crafted such toys for years. If asked, they provide the PCs with the location of his shop.
- 3. Stake out** the homes of one or more council members. This may lead to a confrontation between the adventurers and a gang of diminutive assassins. Attentive PCs could track the demon-dolls' route back to the hidden grate they use to access the town unseen.
- 4. Encounter** a group of demon-dolls while out at night. The PCs may observe them prowling in Gravo's streets and track their movements to the grate entrance of the demon-dolls' subterranean hideout.

Demon-Dolls

The GM should be familiar with the capabilities of Astarbul's demon-dolls (see the "**Demon-Doll**" entry in the "**New Monsters**" section, pp. 16–17). These constructs prefer to use their stealth abilities to strike their enemies at close range. A group of them then swarms and grapples the victim, allowing for a bonus to their bite attack. Below are the statistics for the demon-dolls used in this module.

Demon-doll: AC 6; MV 6"; HD 1 + 2; hp varies; #AT 3 or 1; Dmg 1d2/1d2 claws and 1d3 bite, or 1d4 dagger or 1d3 hand crossbow + **poison** (save vs. Poison or be paralyzed for 1d3 turns); SA grapple (if both claws hit), +4 with bite when grappling, swarm attack, *move silently* (75%), *hide in shadows* (70%); SD immune to all attack forms and spells except fire-based attacks (+1 damage per die), *shatter*, *warp wood*, *disintegrate*, and *protection from evil*; INT semi- to ow (4–6); AL CE; Size S (2' tall); xp varies; THACO 18; New Monster.

PART 1: THE TOWN OF GRAVOA

A. TEMPLE OF THE BLESSED SHROUD

Dedicated to a Lawful Neutral deity, this ornate stone building features a high, pillared nave with stained-glass windows and ostentatious altar furnishings. It includes a library, kitchen, store-room, head priest's quarters, junior clerics' quarters, acolytes' dormitory, and servants' dormitory. A low stone wall surrounds the temple grounds.

Kasel, a 7th-level cleric, served as the temple's head priest until his death the previous day. He also served as an elder councilman of Gravo. Nearly sixty, Kasel was a well-respected leader in the community, known for his fairness, impartiality, and sage knowledge across many subjects. Following Kasel's death, Hespria acts as the temple's most senior cleric and nominal leader. Clearheaded and tactful, she assists the party in their investigation of Kasel's murder to the best of her ability.

Hespria, female human, 4th-level cleric: AC 10 (none); MV 12"; hp 18; #AT 1; Dmg 1d6 quarterstaff; AL LN; Size M; xp 300; THACO 18; S 10; I 13; W 15; D 14; C 13; CH 16.