

BLACKBYRNE PUBLISHING

Within Death's Gaze



WRITTEN AND CREATED BY JEFF GUPTON

BPO - WITHIN DEATH'S GAZE



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W E L C O M E !

What you are holding in your hands is the final fruition of an idea that has been rattling around in my soul for many years. This is the inaugural publication for Blackbyrne Publishing, an up and coming source for original and enjoyable adventures compatible with the 4th Edition Dungeons and Dragons™ core rules. It has been a collaboration of ideas and artwork, but only a small taste of what Blackbyrne Publishing has to offer. “Within Death’s Gaze” can be used as part of a larger campaign or as a standalone mini-adventure.

Thank you for taking an interest in our product!

Sincerely,

Jeff Gupton
Blackbyrne Publishing

Thanks to: All the Friendly Local Game Stores who helped promote Blackbyrne Publishing by handing out this adventure to anyone who said “sure, why not”. My family for not laughing at my idea and telling me “don’t dream it, be it”. My 5th grade classmates who let me watch as they played this “new” game called Dungeons and Dragons way back in 1981. Everyone who helped make this a reality, even if it was nothing more than being supportive.



Special Thanks to: Herbert, Lowenna, Muradin, Telas (R.I.P.), Carlos and Skridka (my D&D “lab rats”) for the hottest night Blackbyrne will ever see, there truly was “ash falling from the sky”.

Many years ago, the town of Blackbyrne was a thriving lumber community, harvesting, milling and replenishing timber from the surrounding forest. The townsfolk only took what they needed and gave back threefold avoiding the wrath of protective fey guardians. This was until Shiola strolled into town and weaved her seductive web of death....

Background-

Blackbyrne is now a haven of vampires, under the control and direction of Shiola, a self-cursed vampire. Shiola, spurned by the man (vampire) she thought loved her, has cursed herself to a life of undeath beyond that of a mere vampire. Using a variation of the ritual to make oneself a lich, Shiola has imbedded a locket (containing the pictures of her and her love) with the power to re-spawn her should she ever be defeated. The locket is well hidden and its location is up to you, the DM, should you decide to make Shiola a recurring villain. Shiola spent years roaming the area looking for a place to settle in when she came across the sleepy town of Blackbyrne. Disgusted by the close knit and relatively happy community, she chose to taint and corrupt the town, turning the villagers into her spawn. The village still stands as it had prior to Shiola's arrival, but this is only a ruse. Upon closer inspection, each building has been gutted and turned to lairs for the spawn and thralls.

Heavy curtains block the windows and tar seals the roof so that no amount of sunlight will enter the lairs. The only building that has not become a lair is the Red Tooth and Claw Inn.



The Red Tooth and Claw Inn is the lure for wayward adventurers and a key element in Shiola's web. It has accommodations for up to 8 people in the upstairs rooms and a sitting room with a maximum capacity of 20. Each room is 5'x 7' and has room for a small bed and barely enough room to stand up, preventing player characters (PC's) from doubling up.

Daveroth is the original owner of the Inn, Shiola allowed him to remain human to keep watch over Blackbyrne during the day. Daveroth knows Shiola cannot be destroyed (but does not know about the locket or where it's hidden) so he dares not cross her for fear of spending the rest of his life looking over his shoulder. In return, Daveroth is allowed to keep whatever treasure is taken from the victims that wander into the village.

When the PC's arrive, it is night time and a medium rain has begun, hinting at the stronger storm on its way. Read or paraphrase the following text:

As the rain begins to thicken and the skies darken, the smell of a chimney draws your attention. Following the smoke you come across a small village set deep in the forest. As you walk among the old timber buildings, you notice all is quiet and no lights can be seen. As you enter the town square, you see a lonely light ahead of you and the source of the chimney smoke. A sign above the door displays the picture of a red claw and the words "Red Tooth and Claw Inn". Through the window you see a lone man, tending the fires and stirring a cauldron.

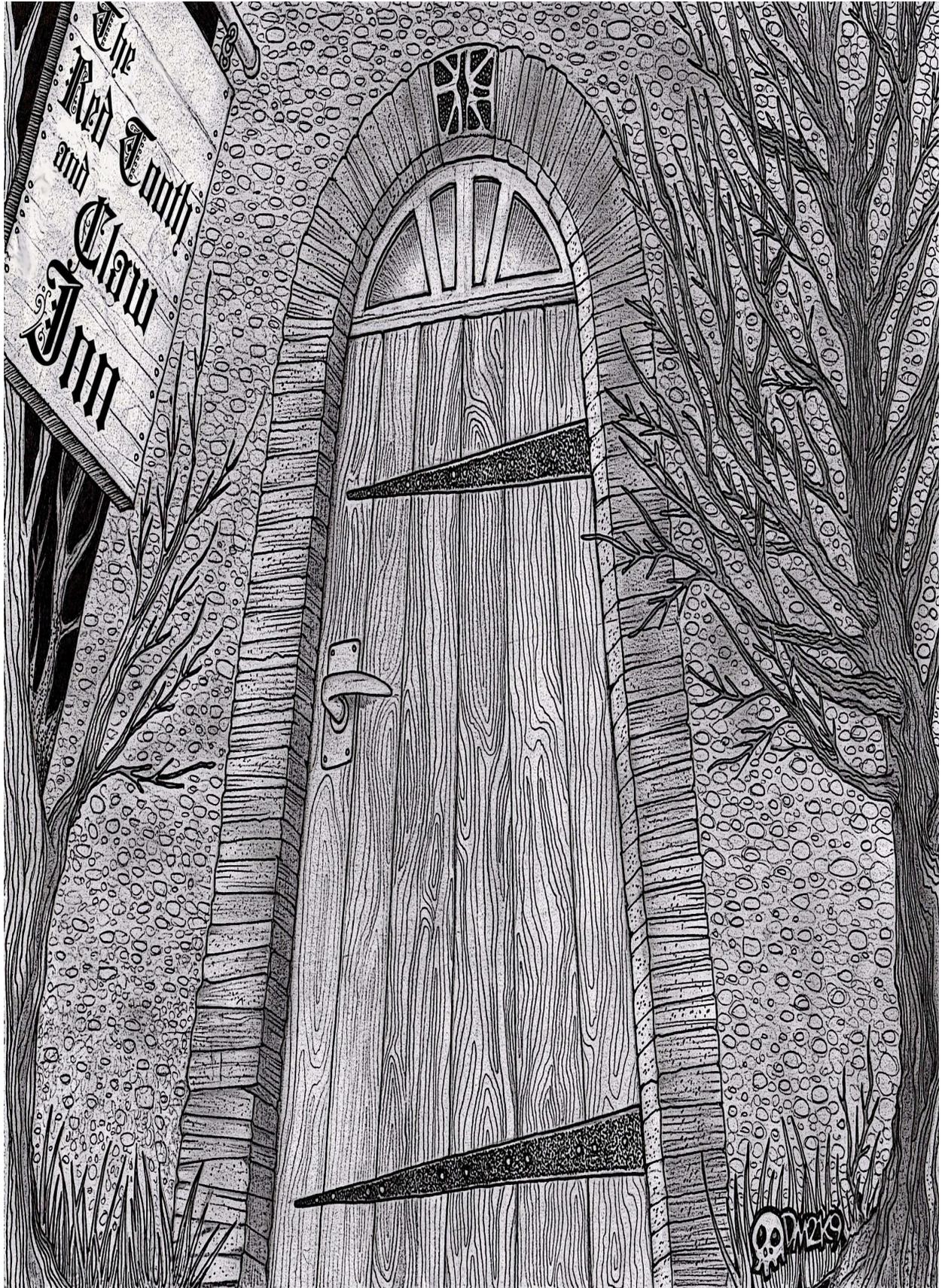


If the PC's enter the inn, as opposed to getting drenched, Daveroth greets them half-heartedly and asks them if they are the "caravan", wanting to know why they are so late. This is all part of the ruse, Daveroth will play dumb and act as if the PC's are the cur-

rent caravan there to trade for milled timber knowing full well that Shiola's magic has drawn the PC's off course and into the village. If the PC's use Insight to judge Daveroth's story, it's a DC 25 due to the years of experience using this ruse. If the PC's try and play this up, make them conduct Bluff Skill checks, but no matter what their roll is, Daveroth knows they are lying and will pretend not to notice. Daveroth will offer the PC's rooms upstairs and servings from the pot of stew currently on the fire.



If the PC's let Daveroth know they are not the caravan, he will offer them use of the rooms upstairs saying "I'm closing up, the caravan is too damn late, let them sleep in the stables!" In either case, Daveroth will wait up until the PC's are done eating and show them upstairs to their rooms. Each room has locking doors and in most cases the PC's should feel secure in their rooms and not need a "watch" schedule. If they chose to set up a watch, alter the following encounter as you see fit.



© 1929

Encounter #1 “BOO!”

Level 1

XP 260-520

4-8 Blackbyrne Vampire Spawn (one for each PC)

This encounter won't be a real challenge to the PC's, but it will set up the level of danger that awaits them. While the PC's are sleeping, the spawn will use their Mist Form to enter each PC's room undetected (see “Mist Form”). Read or paraphrase the following:

A loud thunderclap wakes you from a sound sleep, or was it something more. As your eyes adjust, a flash of lightning illuminates the room and in an instant you see you are not alone. Before you can react, the figure in front of you pounces and attacks!

Tactics: The spawn use their “Deadly Pounce” as their Surprise Round action. After the Surprise Round, call for initiative and follow standard combat rules. This should be a short encounter which the PC's will easily win.

Area Features:

Illumination- Each room has a candle attached to the wall and, unless lit by the PC's, each room is dark with the exception of lightning flashes.

The PC's should suspect that things are not as they seem. What they do next will dictate where the next encounter takes place. If the PC's investigate the inn they discover the following:

1)The back door is barred from both sides (Strength DC 25 to break) If the door is opened, it leads to a narrow alley that winds back around the side of the inn and into the town square. 2)The basement contains old and very spoiled food, as well as no way out. 3)Daveroth is nowhere to be found.

Based on this information, the PC's should choose to either fortify themselves in the Inn or make a run for it. Do not give the PC's too much time to mill about, if they cannot decide in a reasonable amount of time, the monsters from Encounter #2 move into the inn and attack. (see “Tactics”)

Blackbyrne Vampire Spawn **Level 6 Minion**
Medium natural humanoid (undead) XP 65

Initiative +7 **Senses** Perception +5; Darkvision
HP 1; a missed attack never damages a minion.
AC 21; **Fortitude** 18; **Reflex** 19; **Will** 18
Resist 5 necrotic
Speed 7, climb 4 (spider climb)

‡ **Bite** (standard; at-will) • **Necrotic**

+12 vs. AC; 5 necrotic damage (6 necrotic damage against a bloodied target)

Mist Form (standard; daily) • **Polymorph**

The Blackbyrne Vampire Spawn becomes insubstantial and gains a fly speed of 12, but cannot make attacks. The spawn can remain in mist form for up to 5 minutes or end the effect as a minor action. While in Mist Form, the spawn gets an automatic success on any Stealth Skill checks.

Deadly Pounce (standard, encounter)

Once per encounter, the Blackbyrne Vampire Spawn can jump up to four squares from a standing or prone position and make a bite attack. This movement does not prevent opportunity attacks.

Vulnerable to Sunlight

A Blackbyrne Vampire Spawn that begins its turn in direct sunlight can take only a single move action on its turn. If it ends the turn in direct sunlight, it burns to ash and is destroyed.

Alignment Evil **Languages** Common
Str 15 (+5) **Dex** 17 (+6) **Wis** 13 (+4) **Con** 15 (+5)
Int 11 (+3) **Cha** 15 (+5)

Encounter #2 “Get ‘em!”

Level 6 encounter

XP 1650

Daveroth

3- Blackbyrne Vampire Thralls

10- Blackbyrne Vampire Spawn

Tactics: Should they choose to fortify themselves; the encounter takes place inside the inn. Six spawn and 2 thralls use their Mist Form to get past any fortification and easily enter the inn, taking up strategic places around the PC's. Daveroth and two spawn confront any PC trying to leave through the front door and the remaining thrall and spawn will take on anyone leaving through the back. After 2 rounds, if no one has attempted to leave, the remainder of the combatants enter the inn. Daveroth will enter through the front door having one of the spawn clear the way.

Should they make a run for it, the encounter should take place in the center of town. Opening the back door, the PC's should see multiple shapes in the heavy rain (see “Area Features”). Opening the front door, the PC's see as much of the apparently empty town square as the rain will allow. Once outside the inn (either door) the spawn, thralls and Daveroth (now in armor and with weapons) attempt to corral the PC's into the square to attack them from all sides, overwhelming them as much as possible. Daveroth (either way the encounter goes) will fight to the death, knowing failure means suffering the wrath of Shiola, victorious or re-spawned a month later.

In either scenario, one key event happens. On the second round of combat, at the top of the initiative, lightning strikes a nearby tree, setting it on fire and causing it to fall on one of the structures close by, which in turn sets the building on fire.

The fire spreads in a Burst 1 every round, despite the rain, due to the age of the timber used in the buildings. This fire will spread to adjacent buildings as the rounds progress, including the top of initiative in Encounter #3 as well.

If the PC's are in the inn, that should be the building struck, escalating the danger of staying inside. If the fight is outside, then pick an adjacent building to the square and set it ablaze.

Area Features:

Illumination- Inside the inn, the glow of the fire will provide enough light to see as if one of the PC's were holding a torch. Outside the inn, unless the PC's have a light source, there is no illumination other than the lightning (DM's discretion as to every round or every other round), until the fire starts and begins to light up the area.

Weather- Heavy rain is pounding straight down, diminishing vision to two squares normal, up to 4 squares blurred and beyond that vision is blocked.

Once the PC's manage to dispatch all the combatants, give them a moment or two to use up some healing surges and regain encounter powers before Shiola reveals herself. Note that the fire is getting worse, and the rain is lessening, increasing vision.

Encounter #3 “Playtime”

Level 7 encounter

XP 1200 Shiola

Once the PC’s have caught their breath, healed and reset, but before they attempt to leave the square, read or paraphrase the following:

Even as the rain comes down around you and over the crackle of the flames, you hear girlish laughter ring out in the night. “You have destroyed my children, for that you will be punished. But no worry, I will rebuild my family again, starting with YOU!”

Tactics- Shiola remains in the shadows of a nearby roof top (preferably the inn if it’s not on fire) and uses Fey Jaunt or a standard move to get all the PC’s within range of her Lover’s Lament. If she fails to effect the PC’s, she will burn one of her action points to use Tempting Gance if she has line of sight on the fighter or archer. Provided she can keep her distance, she will use her ranged attacks to dominate various PC’s causing them to make basic attacks on their allies. Shiola avoids melee combat at all costs, but once confronted face to face, she will use Stunning Caress to weaken her foe, setting them up for Tempting Gance on her next turn. Shiola knows she cannot die and laughs once she is reduced to ashes. If you wish to make her a recurring villain, now is the time to elude to her coming back with her parting words.

Area Features:

Illumination- The nearby fire provides a suitable light source.

Weather- The rain has lessened since

Encounter #2, allowing normal vision again.

Treasure- DM’s discretion as to what treasure is found stashed by Daveroth in the basement of the inn (provided it didn’t burn to the ground) or in another location of your choice. As said before, the location of Shiola’s locket is entirely up to you. If the PC’s search the buildings before the fire takes them, they find a lone, hand written journal describing the events leading up to the writer’s turning and the suspicious disappearances of townsfolk over a 4 day period. Be as specific or generic as you like.

Shiola		Level 6 Solo Controller	
Medium fey humanoid (undead)		XP 1200	
Initiative +6	Senses Perception +10; Darkvision		
HP 310; Bloodied 155			
AC 23; Fortitude 20; Reflex 21; Will 22			
Resist 5 necrotic ; Vulnerable 5 radiant			
Saving Throws +5			
Speed 6			
Action Points 2			
✚ Stunning Caress (standard; at-will) • Psychic			
+10 vs. Reflex; 2d6 + 4 psychic damage, and the target is slowed and takes a -2 penalty to Will (save ends both)			
✚ Tempting Gance (standard; at-will) • Charm, Gaze, Psychic			
Ranged 20; +10 vs. Will; 2d6 + 4 psychic damage, and Shiola makes a secondary attack against the same target +9 vs. Will; the target is dominated (save ends). Aftereffect: The target falls prone. Shiola can dominate only one creature at a time			
✚ Lover’s Lament (standard; sustain minor; at-will) • Charm, Psychic			
Close burst 10; deafened and dominated creatures are immune; +10 vs. Will; the target is immobilized (save ends).			
Ethereal Jump (move; recharge 2/3) • Teleportation			
Ethereal Jump (move; recharge 5,6) • Teleportation			
Eternal Curse			
When Shiola is reduced to 0 hit points, her body and possessions crumble into dust, but it is not destroyed. She reappears (along with her possessions) in 30 days within 1 square of her Lover’s Locket, unless the locket is also found and destroyed.			
Alignment Unaligned		Languages Common	
Skills Bluff +13, Diplomacy +13, Insight +10, Stealth +11			
Str 14 (+5) Dex 16 (+6) Wis 15 (+5) Con 15 (+5) Int 10 (+3)			
Cha 21 (+8)			

I hope you and your players enjoyed this adventure almost as much as I enjoyed creating it. One thing you may be wondering is why there are no maps with this adventure. I left the maps out of the adventure for two reasons. The first being cost, I do not have a reliable cartography program nor do I have the funds to purchase one at this time. (remember this is a free adventure from a young company) Secondly, I want DM's to read this and envision their version of Blackbyrne leaving them the freedom to make it their own. The only person who can somewhat predict what a group of players would like or enjoy is the DM, not a publishing company. Therefore, I leave the map design up to you, the DM.

As a suggestion, when I ran this adventure for my players, I used the Dungeons and Dragons Dungeon Tiles™ “Streets of Shadow” with fantastic results. In addition to that (for those who enjoy background music), I recommend either “Vampyre” or “Born of the Night” by Midnight Syndicate as excellent mood music. (I would also recommend playing this on a stormy night, but that is a little bit out of humanity's control) I am VERY interested in both positive feedback and constructive criticism (please be honest, but helpful) so forward all comments to:

customerservice@blackbyrnepublishing.com

I assure you that I will personally respond to each and every one who emails, the benefit of dealing straight with the boss. If you have need for clarification, or even if you would like to contribute to future adventures, please contact me as well. Although I do plan to charge a fee for future adventures, I am still interested in making mini-adventures like this free to the public, at least in an online format, and welcome idea, map and artist contributions.

Thank you,

Jeff Gupton
Blackbyrne Publishing

C O M I N G S O O N

EARLY 2010

BP1 "THE HIDDEN CURRENT"

The town of Boarland Falls is like any other trade village along the Lumbado River, prosperous and peaceful, until recently. Strange beings have been seen in nearby Darfall Forest. Rumors of an ancient dragon cult that has come back from the past. Bandits attacking trade routes along the road and river. What Boarland Falls needs the most are some brave and fearless souls to investigate the strange occurrences, but don't dig too deep, you never know what secrets lie beneath the surface of a small town.....

THE HIDDEN CURRENT WILL BE AN ADVENTURE FOR 4-6 PLAYERS OF 1ST-2ND LEVEL COMPATIBLE WITH THE 4E DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS ROLE PLAYING GAME.

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