

LAMENTATIONS
of the
FLAME PRINCESS
ADVENTURES

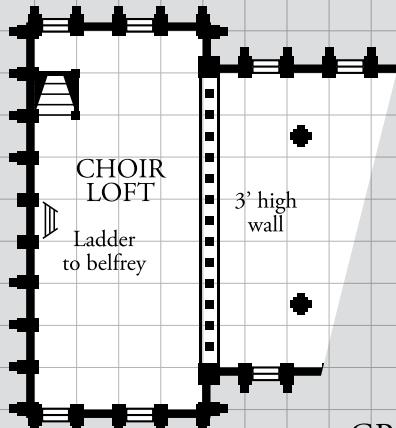
A Single, Small Cut

by Michael Curtis

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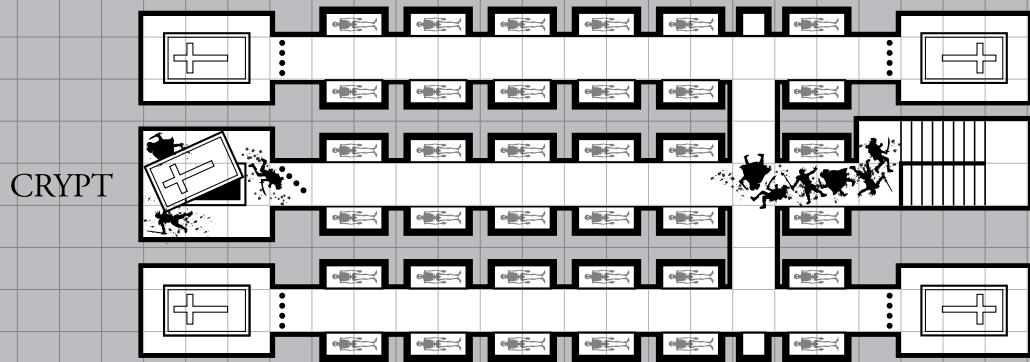
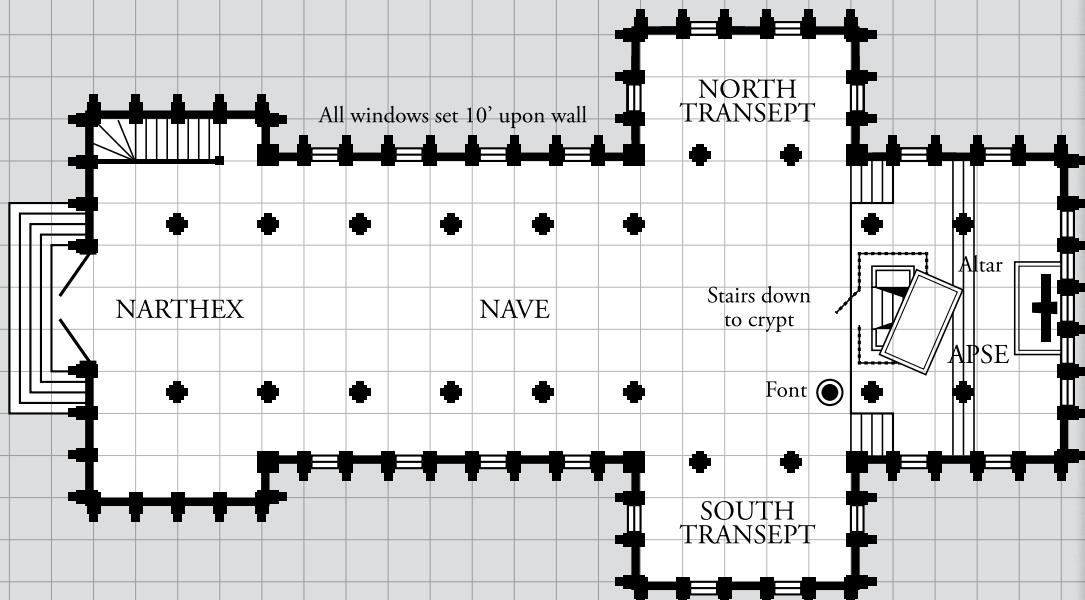
UPPER LEVEL

ST. GOTTHARD'S CHURCH



0 5 10 15 20 25 50 FEET

GROUND LEVEL



CRYPT

LAMENTATIONS *of the* FLAME PRINCESS ADVENTURES

A Single, Small Cut



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Erik Johnson

Setup

This adventure is designed for six 3rd level characters, but it can be altered to make it suitable for PCs of all levels. *A Single, Small Cut* is intended as a brief side encounter that can be inserted into an ongoing campaign whenever the party enters a small church for any reason (seeking healing, looking for sanctuary, needing to confess their numerous sins, etc.). Although self-contained, the party's actions during the encounter can have ongoing consequences (see **Concluding the Adventure** below).

Background

Far to the southeast lies a region of stark mountains and dark forests, a wild, ancient land that the Church holds only the most tentative of claims upon. The Old Ways are still practiced in this gloomy land and hordes of heathens lurk in the lands on the far side of the mountains, and both of these forces threaten to plunge the region back into the firm grasp of Satan as far as the Holy See is concerned. Happily for the Church, a martial brotherhood of soldiers arose in these hinterlands, defending the steep mountain passes from heathen invaders and purging the deep arbors of witches, sorcerers, and blood-stained priests. This military body is known as the Order of Kites.

Although the Church maintains the illusion that the Order of Kites is a devout knightly order, the truth is less glorious. The Order of Kites is a pragmatic body, one more concerned with their daily survival than any lofty vows or codes of honor. Bloody and battered, the Order clings to their holdings by their fingertips, bolstering their ranks with anyone desperate or mad enough to join. This policy means more than a few of the Order are former outlaws

or other ne'er-do-wells who sought sanctuary and anonymity in the dark mountains, earning their keep by slaughtering pagans for God. And despite the pretenses they root out black magic whenever found, the Order skirts the line between necessity and heresy on a daily basis.

Outnumbered and underequipped, the Order of Kites uses any advantage available to them in their war against the heathens—including the confiscated magical tools of slain pagan priests and incinerated witches. Brothers of the Order claim these trophies from their fallen foes, an occurrence which has developed as an unofficial rite of passage in the Order's ranks. So common is this plundering of defeated heretics that the local diocese faces the uncomfortable position of unofficially acknowledging that the Order of Kites now owns more "Satanic" tools than the enemy! The local priests try to police this custom when possible, but the effectiveness of such magical objects in the war against the heathens cannot be denied, and a blind eye is largely turned to the practice.

Some years ago, a company of the Order unearthed and dispatched a pagan temple in

the high mountains. There, they discovered five crystalline bells fashioned from blood-red garnets of exceptional quality. The company's high commander and his cronies claimed the Red Bells (as they came to be known) for themselves. After some experimentation it was learned that the Bells summon forth potent spiritual entities from betwixt the planes. Taking mortal form from fresh humanoid corpses in close proximity to the Bell's ringer, these entities are horrific to behold, but even more frightening is their ability to decimate one's enemies. As with many other of the confiscated "Devil's tools," the five Brothers of the Order used the Red Bells to great effect in battle.

Eventually, the high commander, Beauregard Mallebeench, perished in battle. Upon his death, it was discovered that the entity called up by his Red Bell was no longer under control. The ability to command the thing Mallebeench had named "The Corrector of Sins" died along with the Bell's owner. When Mallebeench's body was returned to his home village, his Red Bell accompanied the corpse and was interred with the body in the crypt beneath St Gothard's Church. There is remained, forgotten and unsought after for decades.

Recently, a scrap of lore documenting Mallebeench's interment came into the possession of the magic-user, Eutaric. A sorcerer of middling power, Eutaric sought enchanted objects to increase his sorcerous knowledge and mortal reputation, and the Red Bell fulfilled both of these aims—or so he believed. Assembling a band of cutthroats and mercenaries, Eutaric embarked on a scheme to possess the Red Bell.

The magic-user and his band entered the church during an early morning mass. Upon entry, Eutaric employed the dreaded incantation *Cloudkill*, casting it from a scroll in his possession, to swiftly and silently slay the church's congregation and priest. The thieves then dragged the bodies into the crypt below, leaving a small cadre of brigands in the church proper to stand guard and to deal with anyone who

might interrupt their crime. Unfortunately for the player characters, they're about to walk into the middle of this burglary.

Even worse for all involved, however, is that Eutaric inadvertently rings the Red Bell when drawing it from Mallebeench's sarcophagus, summoning the Corrector of Sins to this plane once again. The Corrector manifests from the fresh corpses in the crypt and begins laying waste to the sorcerer and his men, before seeking other prey within the church.

The Church

St. Gothard's Church is a small house of worship, one that can be found on a side street in a major city or in the center of a hamlet or village. The church is constructed from dressed, slate-gray fieldstone held into place with dingy white mortar. Laurel green moss grows along the church's northern walls and a small church-yard bearing simple headstones rests along the building's southern side. A squat, 10' tall steeple adorned with a bronze cross turned green by verdigris crowns the building and narrow Gothic windows bearing stained glass mosaics line the church's sides and front. Carved into the lintel over the building's front double doors is the church's name. A separate rectory is located on the grounds for the church's priest, but as it is unimportant to this scenario it is not detailed here.

The church's interior is plain and utilitarian. A narrow flight of wooden stairs in the narthex leads 10' up to a choir loft overlooking the nave below. The loft also contains a ladder leading up to the belfry in the steeple. Bell cords dangle down past the ladder from the bells above. A throwback to older customs, the church's nave lacks pews and congregation members, with the exception of the elderly, are expected to stand during services. The church's pointed ceiling stands 20' above the nave's flagstone floor. During sunny days, the stained glass windows illuminate the nave with a kaleidoscope of green, blue, red, and yellow sunlight.

The "Priest"

A wooden altar dominates the church's apse. Fashioned from local woods and stained dark with use and age, the altar platform is raised 5' above the nave and is accessible by a short flight of stairs along both sides. An iron gate is set into the front of the altar platform; beyond this portal are stone stairs leading down the crypt beneath the church. The gate is closed (but currently unlocked due to Eutaric's entry into the crypt). A pulpit flanked by brass candelabras stands in the center of the altar platform facing the nave. Behind the pulpit is the main altar and a large (8' tall) crucifix featuring a painted, extremely life-like Christ. His wounds are colored a garish red, lacquered to simulate the wetness of fresh blood. A holy water font stands next to the altar platform on the nave floor, but it contains only symbolic water and not truly sanctified holy water (as per p. 76 of *Rules & Magic*). The liquid is useless against the Corrector of Sins.

Two small shrines stand in the alcoves at either end of the church' transept. The shrine in the northern transept bears a lesser altar topped with a carved wooden idol of St. Gothard. The southern shrine holds a score of beeswax candles that burn with a warm glow. The air inside the church smells of wax, harsh incense, and the faint odor of sweat. The trace odor of almonds are also detectable by those with keen olfactory senses. This scent is the lingering result of the *Cloudkill* spell recently unleashed inside the church.

The church proper has a single visible occupant: a human male in his early twenties. His skin is well tanned and his hands rough, which is somewhat odd for a servant of God but not unheard of. A pair of pale green eyes peer out from beneath his tonsured blonde hair. PCs explicitly stating they are examining the priest notice his scalp is red and a single small cut of recent occurrence marks the left side of his head above the hairline. The priest is tall, but of slight build, and wears a simple cassock and cowl woven from brown homespun wool. A wooden crucifix dangles from his neck on a tin chain.

The priest greets the party as they enter, intercepting them in the narthex. He introduces himself as "Father Clement" and bids the party welcome in a thin, nasal voice. In a friendly tone, but one that implies firmness of purpose, Father Clement informs the PCs that weapons are not allowed inside the church and they must disarm themselves in the narthex before entering the nave, the place where all church business is conducted. If the party are local residents or have visited the church before, they know that Father Clement is not the church's usual pastor. If the whereabouts of the church's resident priest are inquired about, Father Clement explains that the pastor is ill with the gout and the diocese has dispatched him to serve the church's congregation while the pastor recovers.



Once disarmed, Father Clement beckons the PCs into the nave, inviting them to rest awhile by extolling the benefits of doing so within the church as is appropriate (saying, for example, “It’s a blessed relief to escape the sun in here, today” on a hot summer day.) Father Clement does his best to put the party off their guard and move them further away from the front doors and their armaments.

Father Clement is actually Clement the Strangler, a wanton murderer and alley-basher. Left behind to watch over the church while the remainder of the thieves penetrate the crypt below, Clement cut his hair hastily and assumed the slain priest’s garments to disguise himself. In the process of that swift, rough shoring of his hair, he nicked his head and irritated his flesh, leaving him with the small wound and razor burn. Clement’s plan is to put the PCs off their guard and maneuver them into the open nave. There, the party finds themselves in the midst of an ambush as four crossbowmen pop up from behind the loft’s low front wall and begin firing on them! There is a 4 in 6 chance this ambush surprises the PCs. Once the trap is sprung, Clement attempts a sneak attack on the party, choosing an obvious spellcaster as his victim if one is present or the fighter who seems the biggest threat if no Elves or Magic-Users are amongst the party.

Clement the Strangler: Armor 14 (Dexterity 16), Move 120’, 4th level Specialist, 13hp, Morale 9. Stealth 4/6, Sneak Attack 4/6, Sleight of Hand 3/6.

Clement has stolen priest’s robes and crucifix, a garrote, a dirk, 11sp, and 6cp.

Crossbowmen: Armor 16, Move 90’, 4th level Fighters, 18hp each, Morale 8.

Each crossbowman has chain armor, light crossbows with 20 quarrels, short swords, and dirks. They each own 6sp and 4cp.

There are four crossbowmen in the choir loft. They fire at targets of opportunity in the nave for as long as possible, alternating volleys so that two arbalesters fire while the other two reload to create a constant barrage of missiles. If one or more PCs flee toward the narthex, two break off from firing to draw their blades and charge down the stairs to intercept them and prevent the PCs from escaping the church or gaining their weapons. If the fight quickly turns against the thieves, Clement howls out a warning to his brethren below, but it is unanswered. The thieves in the crypt have just run into their own problem.

The Corrector of Sins

Four rounds after the fight with the thieves in the nave commences, the gate leading down to the crypt bashes open as two men burst through it. Their bodies are covered with numerous small, circular wounds, as if a score of tiny mouths have bitten into their flesh. Their faces are ashen with terror and the two fleeing men make a beeline towards the church’s entrance, stopping for no reason. They even charge directly past weapon-swinging opponents, blindly failing to defend themselves in their haste to escape. Each is a 2nd level Fighter with Armor 14 and 4hp remaining. They wear leather armor and own short sword, daggers, 1d6sp, and 1d10cp.

Two rounds after this occurs, *something* lurches out through the gate accompanied by a weird flatulent whistling. This thing is the Corrector of Sins, a magical monstrosity brought to life by the inadvertent ringing of the Red Bell.

The Corrector of Sins is a shambling, 8’ tall hulk fashioned from the mangled flesh and internal organs of at least a half-dozen humans. Stumbling about on elephantine legs comprised of knotted arms and bloodied meat, the entity has a body made of leaking stomachs, oozing pancreases, gelatinous gray matter, and cirrhotic livers. Flailing tendrils of human intestines terminating in snapping sphincters lined with

dead men's teeth lash about, biting at anything that comes within reach. It is these orifices that produce the unwholesome whistling that accompanies its arrival.

Corrector of Sins: Armor 12, Movement 120', 12 Hit Dice, 54hp, 6 attacks doing 1d6 damage each, Morale 11. Destroyed by magic & holy water; banished by non-magical attacks. See Red Bell description below for full details.

If any crossbowmen still occupy the choir loft, they fire their quarrels at the Corrector of Sins. After two rounds of this, their Morale fails and they flee towards the exit. Unlike their comrades from the crypt, the crossbowmen defend themselves with their short swords, but continue to cut their way toward the exit. Clement, if he still lives, attempts to push nearby PCs into the Corrector's path or otherwise use them to attract the creature's attentions so that he too can escape. Like his fellows in the loft, Clement defends himself if attacked, but keeps moving towards the exit whenever possible.

The Crypt

Beneath the church is a small, cramped crypt with low, 6' high ceilings. Two dozen "bunk bed" style niches (one placed above the other) are carved into the walls of the crypt's corridors, twelve to a wall. These shallow alcoves bear the moldering bones of former priests and a handful of wealthy parishioners. The middle passageway itself is a slaughter house: the shredded remains of six humans, their corpses torn about and gutted like pumpkins, fill the eastern end of the bloody corridor. This macabre tableau is all that remains of the congregation after the Corrector manifested from their bodies. There is nothing of value amongst the meat; the thieves stripped the bodies after depositing them here. A thick oaken door banded with iron stands at the western end of the corridor. A massive lock once held the door closed, but this device now lies on the floor besides the ajar door. The lock's hasp has been sawed through and flakes of rust and iron dust dapple the flagstones.

Beyond the door is a separate small crypt measuring 10' square. A carved stone sarcophagus with a lid topped with a marble effigy of a soldier in repose stands in the center of the floor. The lid is askew. Inside is the desiccated corpse of a human male dressed in rusted plate armor. A similarly corroded longsword and shield are clasped in the corpse's hands. The shield's face is inscribed with a device depicting a red kite (the bird, not the toy) perched atop a solitary watchtower with a lambent fire burning in the tower's upper window. This is the sigil of the Order of Kites.

The room also holds three freshly-slain human men. Two wear leather armor, while the third is dressed in shredded conjurer's robes (this is Eutaric). Each body bears numerous, small bite wounds and their throats have been torn out. The leather-clad men have 1d10cp and 1d6sp each, along with short swords and daggers. Eutaric's body has a blank scroll tucked in its belt, a dagger, 34cp and 24sp. A blood-soaked sack besides the corpses contains 32cp, 27sp, and a pair of silver candlesticks (25sp value each). In addition to this gruesome booty is a crystalline bell fashioned from a large, painstakingly cut garnet. A number of small etchings run along the bell's lip and a close examination of these carvings identify them as archaic symbols of old. This is the Red Bell (see below). It lies on the floor beside the sarcophagus.

Unless specifically stating caution is taken to avoid this from occurring, a PC lifting the Bell from the floor causes it to chime, thereby creating another Corrector of Sins—assuming the first is no longer manifested and has only been banished and not destroyed. Otherwise, ringing the Bell has no effect. Use the information provided below in the Red Bell's description to determine the strength and special properties of this second Corrector, taking special note of how many humanoid bodies are within the range of the Bell's effect. This second Corrector bursts forth from any freshly slain bodies within range, appearing in the area with the greatest concentration of corpses. It is likely that the

new Corrector of Sins manifests in the nave overhead, effectively bottling some or all of the party inside the crypt. They'll need to fight their way out of the church, which could be fatal if the PCs suffered grievous wounds in the first fight.

The second Corrector of Sins doesn't simply wait in the nave either. If no PC is present inside the church proper, the Corrector senses anyone in the crypt 1d6 rounds after appearing. It moves directly to attack those PCs, blocking the crypt's passage with its bulk.

Concluding the Adventure

The destruction of the Corrector of Sins effectively ends this adventure, but the events occurring herein can return to affect the party. First, should the party flee the church and the Corrector of Sin is not banished or destroyed, it takes possession of St. Gothard's as its home. In short order (i.e. after the first group of unsuspecting locals pays a visit to the church and is slain), the diocese dispatches a party of exorcists to deal with this "demonic infestation." If they fail to destroy the Corrector, an outside party—namely the PCs—might be approached and hired or browbeaten to attend to the problem. The referee is encouraged to make the Corrector of Sins more formidable, possibly granting it new powers that have emerged in the time since its original appearance to further challenge and surprise the party.

A party that destroys the Corrector of Sins but chooses to make off with items of value from the church (namely the candlesticks and coins found in the bag in the crypt) finds themselves branded enemies of the church. Locals spotted them departing St. Gothard's and once the wholesale slaughter and looting was discovered, the PCs are blamed for the crime and a bounty is placed on their heads. Bounty hunters, inquisitors, and zealous lay clergy are just some possible opponents that dedicate themselves to bringing the PCs to ecclesiastical justice, dead or alive.

PCs claiming the Red Bell—assuming they take precautions to keep it from ringing—may be able to eventually use it successfully, but doing so will require long, expensive research and possibly travel to the mountains from whence it came.



The Red Bell

Fashioned by pagan sorcerers in the far mountains, there are seven of these objects known in existence. Five are in the possession of the Order of Kites (or interred with their mortal remains). The location of the other two are unknown.

Each bell measures 6" tall and 4" in diameter, and is carved from a large garnet (5000sp value). The precious stone is formed with impeccable craftsmanship into a chime that produces a bone-shaking ringing when the clapper strikes. This sound is sufficient to pierce dimensional boundaries and call for a specific entity from the elder dark. Each Red Bell summons a specific creature.

The Red Bell in this scenario calls up a thing named the Corrector of Sins by its former owner. The game statistics for the creature presented above are for its initial appearance in the adventure, but may differ should it reappear later. This is because, although the same extra-dimensional entities are always summoned by the Red Bells, its exact manifestation is dependent on the number of fresh humanoid bodies available to fuel its manifestation and the subtle differences in the physical health and condition of the tissue it draws upon when appearing. Use the following guidelines to determine the Corrector of Sins subsequent appearances.

For every humanoid corpses within a 50' radius of the Red Bell when it is rung, the Corrector of Sins has 2 Hit Dice when manifesting. The Corrector cannot exceed more than 20 Hit Dice, however.

The Corrector of Sins has a base Armor of 12, a number of attacks per round equal to the number of corpses used in its manifestation (up to a maximum 10), and a base damage of 1d6 per attack. These stats can change based upon the Corrector's manifested powers (see below).

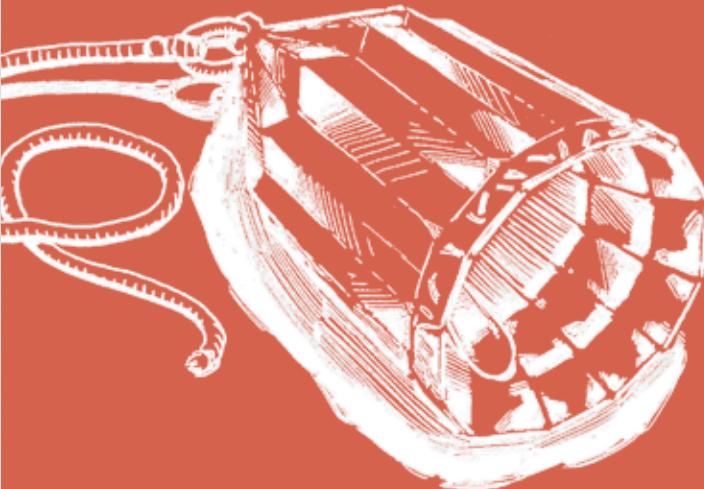
The Corrector may manifest with additional powers as per the Summon spell. Determine these powers as per Step Four of the spell's description. For this purpose, treat the Corrector of Sins as if the caster's saving throw vs. Magic had failed.

The Corrector of Sins is injured by normal and magical weapons, fire, and holy water. If slain by normal weapons or fire, however, it is only banished from this plane and will reappear the next time the Red Bell is rung. Magical weapons and holy water destroy the Corrector completely, but all damage inflicted on the creature must be caused by these sources. If even a single point of damage is sustained from non-magical weapons, the Corrector is merely banished, not destroyed.

Unlike other summoned entities, the Red Bell serves as a focal conduit for the Corrector of Sins, allowing it to remain manifested until either banished by physical injury, destroyed, or the Bell's rightful owner dismisses it by ringing the Red Bell again. In this scenario, the Corrector remains on this plane of existence until destroyed or banished.

The Red Bell becomes attuned to its owner the first time it is rung and remains connected to that individual even beyond the owner's death. Only the Bell's proper owner can use the device as intended and maintain a manner of control over the Corrector of Sins. It is said that an attuned Red Bell can be recalibrated to a new owner once its previous possessor has died, but

doing so requires a rare variant of the *Magic Jar* spell. This version of the spell imparts a small spark of the new owner's soul within the chime, allowing it to use the Bell properly and control the Corrector of Sins. Learning this spell requires either research or a prolonged expedition into the mountainous region from which the Red Bell hails.



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