

DF2.5

Bonus Module

THE TOLIO Mini-Module



THE HIDDEN VALORIA CAMPAIGN Gang War!

Mini-Adventure DF2.5
by Scott Taylor

Gang War! is a fully 1E & 5E compatible adventure for characters levels 2-5 and contains all information needed to run an excursion against the infamous gangs of the Patina Court.

Yep, you've stepped in it now! Cross blades with several of the gangs of the Patina to help avoid an all-out war that is likely to set the neighborhood ablaze! Once again the players are pressed into service to help keep the peace in the Patina when a rumor of murder and deceit pits one gang against another, and tenuous alliances threaten to pull all other gangs into the mess as well.



Gang War!

Synopsis:

Much is made inside the Patina of the various gangs—their mutual hatred of one another and always vying for supremacy—but one thing is clear, everyone bands together when outside gangs try to interfere in Patina underworld politics. A week ago, news surfaced of a new gang ‘crossing the Main’, but unlike previous incursions, this gang wore strange masks and preyed on women in particular. Can the characters align with a Patina Gang long enough to put an end to this mysterious new menace?

All ‘grey blocks’ are for 5E conversions in this section.

Gamemaster’s Notes

The new ‘gang’ is really a cult of Hades called the Smiling Skulls, and has moved out of spoiled hunting grounds south of the Main into the Patina looking for fresh victims to sacrifice to their dark god. As in DF1.5, there are limited structures in this adventure, basically 4 rooms, and I’ve left their construction to the Dwarven Forge players who can build them as they like with sets they already own.

The Smiling Skulls

Led by a mad priest named Septus the Knife Lama, this small cult has been growing for years inside Valoria, but only recently began taking its service to Hades more lethally serious. Now, instead of venerating natural death, Septus has moved on to a more pragmatic murder approach, and his followers have gotten a taste for blood. They enjoy the hunt, and will stalk prey through streets, causing fear and anguish before finally moving in to make the kill. Most of the gang are thieves and assassins, but Septus is a true cleric, and his adherence to murder has allowed him to wield a deadly dagger blessed by his deity.

To Cross or not to Cross

The adventure will revolve around stopping the Smiling Skulls, but the players will have to decide exactly how they wish this to occur. Some of the conflict will come inside the Patina, and once this is completed the Smiling Skulls will retreat back ‘over the Main’ and not return. However, they will still be active, and it will be up to the players to decide if they cross the Main and pursue the cult to its final destruction.

Setting the Trap

The players will find themselves faced with three challenges over the course of this mini-adventure. First, they must identify the cult and then establish what its purpose is, presumably with the help of the Ladies of Prophet. Once this is accomplished, they should enter the makeshift lair of the Smiling Skulls within the Patina and destroy the agents there. However, Septus will not be there for this battle so if the players want to end this for good, they will have to go over the Main and destroy Septus in the true headquarters.

Part One Meeting of the Minds

1.

A party member (a female preferred, but a cleric if not) will be approached by an agent of Istan Ma, gang boss of the Ladies of Prophet. She indicates that Ma wishes a meeting concerning crimes that seem to be focused on women inside the Patina.

If the players accept the offer, they will be shown to the Rancid Cauldron where Ma waits at a back table.

Greetings, I've not much time so I'll make this quick. Word on the street is that a new gang has crossed over the Main and is targeting women for

some dark purpose. I'm putting ears to the street to find out more, but as you seem keen on protecting the interests of the people of the Patina, I wanted to provide you with this...

She then slides over a scroll, looks fervently around the bar, and then bids you a good evening. Attempts to engage her further are rebuffed.

The scroll contains several accounts from beggars of men in skull masks lurking in the shadows of various streets during the late hours. They usually watch and wait, but on two occasions they have been seen chasing a woman, out late on business and not seen from again, down an alley. The last such occurrence happened on Orchard Way, a thin snake of an alley close to the Helicrium Bathhouse. The source indicated that the victim was Desdomona, a server at the Cauldron and perhaps someone the players are familiar with.

2.

Orchard Way has no connection at all to its namesake, the alley little more than a refuse-strewn byway little used by anything having less than four legs. The smell is not of a fruity nature, and as you pick through the debris, flies buzz around you in small clouds.

Oddly enough, and just as much a pain in the ass, a rust monster has tunneled up from the sewers and taken up residence in the debris, seeking out choice bits of outcast metal. Once disturbed, it will come out, hungry for the party's valuables.

1 Rust Monster: [AC 2, HD 5, HP 26, #AT 2, D Nil (tentacles), corrodes and destroys all metal touched by a tentacle, magically enchanted metals gain a saving throw equal to 10% per plus]

TREASURE

NONE.

1 Rust Monster [AC 14, HD 5d8+5, HP 27, #AT 1, Hit +3, Dam Bite 5 (1d8+1) or Antennae, Iron Scent, Rust Metal]

Further investigation (including the use of any ranger tracking skills) will show signs of a struggle here. Someone, probably a woman, entered the alley but did not exit it, although

other feet, mostly covered in a rusty residue, did leave the alley heading north.

3.

The streets of the Patina drift past as the rusty prints lead you down the secondary and tertiary byways. Finally, after several false trails and the failing light of the day, one of the dozens of abandoned outbuildings of a greater Patina mansion along the Wizard's Knoll brings an end to the trial.

Again, ranger scouting skills or thieving abilities can be employed here to get a 'lay of the land'. Successful rolls will provide any and all of the following details concerning the dwelling.

1.

The building is made of stone, unlike many lesser structures in the area, and has a single studded wooden door and two shuttered windows. A small trail of smoke, probably from interior candles, drifts from a lone chimney.

2.

Markings on the door, softly carved around the edges, seem to be dedicated to a god. A successful Wis check [**Wisdom DC 10**] by a cleric can identify them as blessings to Hades.

3.

The second floor balcony of the Patina mansion has a shadowy form tucked within the recesses. This is a scout for the cult, and he will signal those inside by ringing a gong next to him. To detect him, the ranger must make a successful Wisdom check **[Wisdom DC 13]**, or a thief must make a find/remove traps **[DC 14]**.

4.

Across from the house, and going directly into the Wizard's Knoll, is a small cavern in which the bones of several people have been stashed.

1 Cultist Scout: [AC 7, HD 4, HP 16, #AT 1, D 1-4 (dagger)]

TREASURE

NONE.

1 Cultist Scout [AC 13, HD 6d8+6, HP 33, #AT 2, Hit +4, Dam Knife 4 (1d4+2), Multiattack]

Part Two

Sacrifice of Desdomona

1.

Searching the studded door, you quickly realize it has been bolted from the inside and cannot be opened without a ram or a spell.

A successful open doors Strength check will also break the bolt **[Strength DC 19]**, and any thief can use hear noise **[Perception DC 16]** to hear the quiet murmur of chanting coming from inside.

If the door isn't broken on the first attempt, those inside will prepare for an assault, the bulk of the force holding their ground in the front room while the leader falls back into the small back room.

2.

This room is decorated with a single table stained with russet crimson splashes and leather ties. Around the walls are painted symbols of Hades, and standing at the ready are seven men in heavy cloaks and skull masks, each brandishing a blade.

7 Cultists: [AC 7, HD 4, HP 16, #AT 1, D 1-4 (dagger), 2 cultists can cast Cause Light Wounds]

TREASURE

43 SP BETWEEN THEM ALL.

7 Cultists (2 with spell-casting ability) [AC 13, HD 6d8+6, HP 33, #AT 2, Hit +4, Dam Knife 4 (1d4+2), Multiattack, Spellcasting (Wisdom base spell save DC 11, and +3 to attack with spells), Cantrip: Light, Sacred Flame, Thaumaturgy; 1st (4 slots): Command, Inflict Wounds, Shield of Faith]

3.

A flimsy hanging is eased aside, the room beyond a mess of cots, discarded food, and soured beer. Amid the clutter, a lone man stands with a blade at the ready, a bound woman behind him wildly struggling against her bonds.

This is Kraven, a former gladiator and newly minted sub-boss of the cult. Always one for a good fight, he will take every opportunity to engage multiple opponents at once. He's also an expert with knives, especially as thrown weapons, and will spend one attack each round hurling a knife at any spell-caster in the party.



Kraven: [AC 4, HD 8, HP 64, #AT 2/1, +4 Attack, D 1-6+6 (short sword) or 1-4+5 (throwing dagger), Weapon Specialization Short Sword and Dagger, Multi-Target Fighting (for every opponent fighting against Kraven, he gains a +1 to his AC due to intense training versus gang tactics)]

TREASURE

SHORT SWORD +1, 21 GP.

Kraven [AC 16, HD 15d8+45, HP 112, #AT 3, Hit +7, Dam Short Sword 7 (1d6+4) or Throwing Knives 6 (1d4+4), Multiattack, Parry (adds 3 to his AC against one melee attack that would normally hit)]

instruct Kraven to continue preparations for the coming of Septus, who awaits word of six more sacrifices before coming over the Main. If the party chooses, they might confer with their contacts, including Iotas, and find that informants from various gangs have located Septus's true lair south of the Main.

2.

The Main, a street that represents the very lifeblood of Valoria. Running east to west, it bisects the city and allows trade to flow. Now, for the protection of the Patina, you move across this great thoroughfare and into the markets, housing, and businesses of the Princess Market.

Part Three Across the Main

1.

Notes and messages lie haphazardly amid the clutter of the back room, Desdomona weeping into the chest of anyone willing to allow it.

Here is where the party must make a choice—continue the investigation, or simply return Desdomona to her home and move on to other things. If they search the room, they will discover short communiques (a 1E campaign might employ thieves' cant) that

This should be an experience for the players, like leaving home for the first time (if the campaign to this point has been completely set inside the small but complex world of the Patina). I would suggest creating your own flair here, but the mission to put an end to Septus should be under the cover of darkness as it is likely that any armed party leaving the Patina would be stopped by wary city guards.

A Wisdom check [Wisdom DC 14] by a ranger or a Charisma check [Charisma DC 14] by a thief or bard will set you on the straight path to Septus's lair, otherwise, the new district will confuse the party and they will have to return on another night. For every failure, add an additional cultist to Septus's hall in encounter 3.

3.

Once a fine textile shop, this now seemingly abandoned structure isn't much more than a solid square building with two levels. The front door has been subtly marked with a symbol of Hades, and the windows of the building are all shuttered.

The door isn't locked, as Septus has little fear of repercussions from his incursion into the Patina at this point. However, within the downstairs main room, seven armed cultists converse over a simple dinner, their silhouettes marked by low candlelight.

Up to 7 Cultists*: [AC 7, HD 4, HP 16, #AT 1, D 1-4 (dagger), 2 cultists can cast Cause Light Wounds]

****Varies with failures at the door, starting with 5.***

TREASURE

103 SP AND 7 GP BETWEEN THEM ALL.

Up to 7 Cultists* (2 with spell-casting ability) [AC 13, HD 6d8+6, HP 33, #AT 2, Hit +4, Dam Knife 4 (1d4+2), Multiattack, Spellcasting (Wisdom base spell save DC 11, and +3 to attack with spells), Cantrip: Light, Sacred Flame, Thaumaturgy; 1st (4 slots): Command, Inflict Wounds, Shield of Faith]

****Varies with failures at the door starting with 5.***

A lone stair leads to the upper level and bastion of Septus himself. The man is currently contemplating over a tome of Hades' portents, and any commotion below will allow him to prepare himself with enchantments and spells by the time any characters arrive.

He has no wish for parley, and he knows that death has always been a possibility and perhaps even a blessing. His lone tactic—to take a player with him at all costs. He will focus all his efforts on a single target, screaming about the 'Boatman of the Styx' as he does so. However, with the preparation time, he will have cast his Silence 15' Radius spell on the top of the stairs as well as scattering a sheaf of sticks on the floor there (for a Sticks to Snakes spell). With his Bless and Protection from Good in play, he will be quite ready for combat.

Septus: [AC 0, HD 10, HP 70, #AT 1, D 1-4+3 (dagger), Poison (Saving Throw vs Poison or take an additional 6-36 damage], Spells 1st (6 slots): Bless, Cause Light Wounds, Command, Protection from Good; 2nd (6 slots): Hold Person, Spiritual Hammer, Silence 15' Radius; 3rd (4 Slots): Dispel Magic, Cause Blindness, Prayer; 4th (3 slots): Cause Serious Wounds, Sticks to Snakes; 5th (2 slots): Cause Critical Wounds, Slay Living.

TREASURE:

RING OF PROTECTION +2, BUCKLER SHIELD +1, 'NIGHTSINGER' DAGGER OF VENOM +3, 32 GP AND 3 PP BETWEEN THEM ALL.

Septus [AC 13, HD 10d8+20, HP 70, #AT 2, Hit +9, Dam Knife 7 (1d4+5), Multiattack, Spellcasting (Wisdom base spell save DC 14, and +5 to attack with spells), Cantrip: Light, Sacred Flame, Thaumaturgy; Spells 1st (4 slots): Bless, Inflict Wounds, Command, Protection from Evil and Good; 2nd (3 slots): Hold Person, Spiritual Weapon, Silence; 3rd (3 Slots): Dispel Magic, Mass Harming Word, Prayer; 4th (3 slots): Guardian of Faith; 5th (2 slots): Mass Cause Wounds, Slay Living. Poison 18 (6D6) (Constitution DC 16)]

Conclusion

Once Septus has been killed, and the cult shattered, the characters can return to the Patina as unsung heroes, save for the stories told by Desdomona at the Rancid Cauldron. There is also a small bond forged between the characters and Istas, although she would deny it to her death bed.

Credits:

Authors: Scott Taylor

Editing: G. Scott Swift

Design/Layout: Andrew Rodgers

Cover Art: 'Cult Attack' by Jim Holloway

B/W Interior Illustration:

Chet Minton

Dungeons & Dragons ©, Players Handbook ©, and Dungeon Masters Guide © are the sole property of Wizards of the Coast and Art of the Genre makes no claims on these trademarks.

