

The Blood Shrine of Cerabus

As recounted by Abbot Timis of the Assilian Monks of Cloudspire Abbey

Long ago the island continent of Gant was a wild and dangerous place. Its population was largely nomadic save for several powerful City States. During these dark times a demon of immense power walked the land of Gant. Its name was Cerabus, a cruel and demented creature, whose thirst for bloodshed was unquenchable, as was its pride. Cerabus sought to be worshipped as a god. Through fear, violence, and promises of great power he spawned a loyal following. They traveled across Gant converting many to their twisted religion and sacrificing those that would not convert. Over time Cerabus' followers became an army, soldiers as demented and violent as the one they called master. Of those who rose up to fight this dark army was a young King named Helius of the City State of Drakkus. At first the armies of Helius' won many victories, but the bloodshed of these fierce battles seemed only to fuel Cerabus' power, and over time the King's armies had to fall back and give ground until finally retreating behind the walls of their City. The siege lasted for six treacherous months, many died from disease and starvation. Desperate to save his people from torture and death at the hands of the cruel demon and his men he summoned Cerabus to a secret meeting in the lowest dungeon of his castle. Cerabus appeared, and devoured the King's personal guard. The demon was about to slay King Helius but before it could the King made an offer that stayed Cerabus' hand. King Helius offered to build a shrine in the demon's honor where daily blood sacrifices would be made; in exchange Cerabus would leave Gant. The demon's pride and ambition took hold, and it saw the opportunity to gather worshipers and drink the blood of other worlds, while feeding off a constant source of power here on Gant. Cerabus agreed to leave Gant, but claimed that if ever the sacrifices ceased it would return and exact vengeance on the King and his people.

So it was that King Helius of Drakkus constructed the Blood Shrine, a large stone keep, charged with subtle demonic energies, which housed a labyrinth. The King purchased a breeding pair of fierce and savage Minotaurs from across the seas and sealed them within the Blood Shrine. They were forced to be the instruments of the daily sacrifices, as the King had not the stomach to order any of his own people to carry out the gruesome task. As the first of the sacrifices were made Cerabus was satisfied and left Gant along with most of his followers. He left behind a small contingent that would watch over the Blood Shrine in secret to ensure the blood continued to flow. And so it did, day after day. It was King Helius' greatest triumph but also his greatest curse. He saved his people from wholesale torture and slaughter only to deliver them into the bondage of an unquenchable blood debt. At first the King sent only the darkest of souls to their death, emptying the cities dungeons. But as time stretched on and crime became almost non existent due to the terrible price of conviction, the King's source of sacrifices ran out. Fearing the return of Cerabus the king turned his sights on the elderly and the ill. Desperately trying to maintain the greater good of his people he scoured the land for sacrifices, but as he judged the worth of other human beings day after day, year after year, he sunk deeper and deeper into despair and darkness. To further the King's troubles his captive Minotaurs had giving birth to a son who in his adolescence had begun to develop strange powers, beyond the physical strength of his parents. The Kings advisors and mages sensed a latent source of spiritual energy within the young Minotaur and warned that if left to develop the creature could one day grow powerful enough to tear down the labyrinth walls and destroy the Blood Shrine. Thus arose a dilemma of grand proportions. To enter the labyrinth was to welcome certain death at the hands of the family of Minotaurs, now quite enraged after years of imprisonment.

One mage among them offered a solution. He would channel a spell through the walls of the Blood Shrine that would seek out and destroy the young Minotaur. The plan would have worked but none knew of the subtle energies that Cerabus himself had bestowed into his shrine. Instead of killing the poor creature it locked him into a deep trance, powered by the energy within the walls themselves. He was never seen again and all assumed that the creature had been killed. The creature's mother was plunged into insanity at the demise of her son, the only joy in her dismal life, and threw herself against the walls of the labyrinth again and again, in a vain attempt to break the foul spell holding her son. For five days the walls of the Blood Shrine shook and the halls were filled with her bellowing rage until finally she collapsed, her body broken upon the walls of her imprisonment. The mage responsible for the spell disappeared shortly thereafter, forever changed from his hapless interaction with the powers of Cerabus, his name has been forgotten with times relentless passing.

By this time the people of Drakkus had come to despise and dread the Blood Shrine. They lived in constant fear that they or their loved ones might be next on the list of sacrifices. As the years stretched on and the King grew old the numbers of those that were alive during the siege of Cerabus grew thin. The younger generations who grew up under the shadow of the Blood Shrine viewed King Helius with contempt and fear, whose dark and brooding moods had cast an irrevocable shadow on his former self. No longer was he viewed as a savior to his people but as rather a dictator with dark and evil appetites. It was not long before the younger generations grew old enough to take up arms and openly revolt against their King. At first the revolts were isolated and disorganized but soon leadership began to take form. The City was plunged into Civil war, discord and bloodshed ran opening in the streets. All the while the King sent his subjects into the Labyrinth day after day. The two factions fought fiercely. The rebels thought themselves close to victory against the King's men but soon people flocked back to the King's banner as he ordered that henceforth only rebels would be sent into the Labyrinth. A stalemate soon set in as the rebels controlled half the city state while the King's men held the other half. Drakkus slowly began to devour herself from within and her King gave himself over wholly to the embrace of insanity. Finally on the eve of the 50th year since the dark pact was made that caused Cerabus to leave Gant, King Helius entered the Labyrinth, his city in flames from civil war, and was never to be seen again. With this final act the King's forces folded and were over run by the rebels. The population of Drakkus was so decimated that they could not rebuild their city and so her citizens scattered in all directions save for a few of the rebels who chose to settle nearby in a small village they named Kingsfolly. And so the fate of Drakkus was severed, in violence and bloodshed just as was feared 50 years earlier by her King. However in those 50 years tens of thousands of blood sacrifices were made to Cerabus, and his victory made all the sweeter. Perhaps it had been its intention all along, knowing that the King's desperate plea to save his people would plunge them into an even greater darkness, perhaps it was this that stayed Cerabus' hand so many years ago. The ruins of Drakkus remain today, an accursed place where none choose to dwell. The Blood Shrine stood for many more years, none choosing to approach it for fear that its monsters and secrets might consume them. Most chose to forget about the dark events surrounding the foreboding structure, only the history books and the people of Kingsfolly now remember those times. But the tale does not end here.

Many lifetimes of men have passed but finally after all these years the Blood Shrine has been destroyed. Over the years a few especially violent criminals were cast into the labyrinth as in days of old, their screams casting suspicions that the ancient Minotaur trapped within must have still drawn breath through some unholy power of the evil shrine. One brave, or perhaps

foolish, man proved this to be true, and in part brought about the destruction of the Blood Shrine. His name is Theseus. A year ago he entered the Labyrinth of his own free will. Some say it was because the Minotaur had grown old and weak, others say it was because he entered the labyrinth with purpose, and yet others say it was simply that he had been well armed and possessed great skill, regardless Theseus defeated the Minotaur and returned with the creatures head on his pole-axe. It was not long before the villagers of Kingsfolly heard of the ancient Minotaur's death. Long had they desired to destroy the Blood Shrine, to bring peace to the memory of their ancestors whose blood was spilled there, yet they had always feared that if they brought the walls down the Minotaur would come and destroyed their village. So when Theseus arrived sporting the creatures head they hastily constructed siege weapons and pounded on the old stone shrine day after day. The energies that charged the walls must still have surged through the stone as it took many weeks to finally breach the outer walls. However once they had been breached the structure fell to pieces within days. By the time the villagers were finished with it not one stone stood atop another. Among the piles of bones within the labyrinth they found only one set of Minotaur bones, and the headless corpse of Theseus' prey. Still perhaps, the tale does not end.

After the King's death at the Blood Shrine of Cerabus the blood debt was broken. However contrary to the agreement that was made Cerabus has not returned all these long years, the reason remains a mystery, though there are speculations. Some say that the line of King Helius was broken and therefore Cerabus had no need to return for vengeance, some say Cerabus found power and godhood on some other world and has no need for this one, others hopefully claim that Cerabus was slain on some distant world and will never return, while the more pessimistic say that Cerabus may already be on his way here. No one knows for certain. Most would rather forget. How or when the rest of the story may unfold remains a mystery.

Questline

Prologue:

Bloodbrood the Cleaver awakes one day to discover that the walls of the labyrinth that he calls home have crumbled, and his parents are dead. He leaves his prison and the only place he has ever known and wanders, a monster with nowhere to go. Upon arriving in the bustling port city of Almsberg in Western Gant he is almost immediately surrounded by an angry mob. The situation is grim but a timely intervention by a red robed Master-mage named Tolith spares everyone bloodshed. Tolith offers Bloodbrood an apprenticeship at the Vestin College of Pyromancy, recognizing his obvious physical potential and his more subtle potential in the spiritual arts.

All that Tolith asks in exchange is for Bloodbrood to complete a simple task, to gather a plant called Flamespire that grows near some old ruins in the Celeros forest. Marcel Devon, a local ranger agrees to take Bloodbrood there along with another client; a Dwarven Druid named Seleena who is interested in studying the ruins. After defeating a band of Goblins that has set up camp in the ruins Bloodbrood harvests the plants. While investigating the ruins Seleena falls into a pit when a section of the ruin collapses underneath her. She discovers a skeleton guarding an ancient treasure chest. Inside the chest is a simple looking mace that glows only when in proximity to the ruins.

Bloodbrood returns to Almsberg and his officially made an apprentice of Master-Mage Tolith, who etches in flame his personal seal on Bloodbrood's right hand.

Chapter 1: The Lantern of Everflame

Blood-brood the Cleaver & Seleena Rainmaker, meet Taylor Lewis & Ebonethia Sablewood (short intro quest). Blood-brood and Seleena, on their way to deliver the Lantern of Everflame to an old hermit in the Celeros Forest, rescue Taylor & Ebonethia who have been capture by a group of slavers. The battle is fierce and forms a strong bond amongst the group.

Chapter 2: Ambush at Kingsfolly

Bloodbrood is given information that answers to his past lie in a village called Kingsfolly (it's a trap meant to lure him to his death) after fighting through the trap escape to a nearby farm house, hide out there, eventually discovered hiding in the barn, and had to fight to survive.

Chapter 3: Conclave Business

Selena receives her first mission from the Conclave of Vahlin's Earth (her Father is Hargast the Chief Druid and her mother is an Oracle). During the mission Sablewood Elves attack them and try to capture Ebonethia. Battle 1: Red Wyrms, Battle 2: Ogres, Battle 3: Sablewood Elves

Chapter 4: The Cult Emerges

The Conclave of Vahlin's Earth sends Selena to investigate what appears to be a ritual sacrifice which leads to the discovery of a new movement called the Cult of Cerabus, started by ancient followers of Cerabus after the destruction of the Blood Shrine. Run into Theseus for the first time (don't know who he is) en-route, he challenges Bloodbrood to single combat but Bloodbrood's friends interfere when it becomes apparent that Theseus is more than a match for him. After some detective work they narrow down the next intended victim to one of two children. They catch the cultists in the act that night, lead by one of the villagers. They defeat them and after questioning are lead to a nearby abandoned mine where the cult cell leader is hiding out. After defeating the cultists they return to the village and discover it has been burnt to the ground and all its people killed (unbeknownst to them it was a High Elf purge). After reporting back to the conclave Selena is officially accepted into the conclave. Battle 1: Theseus, Battle 2: Cult henchmen, Battle 3: Cult Cell Leader w/ henchmen.

Between these events Selena and Bloodbrood travel to the village of Delta, far to the east, at the request of the Conclave, to disrupt a meeting between Cultists from the West and a powerful Witch from East. They meet some new friends, Arolthus the Royal Executioner of Vesticar who is hunting the Witch and his friends Silus of the Black Hand and Mute, Way Watcher of the Guardians of Athelnon. Together they are able to defeat the Cultists and slay the evil witch.

Chapter 5: An Old Friend and a new Enemy

On the return trip from Delta, Ebonethia and Taylor meet them in the village of Windshore to help out in case anyone thinks to trouble Bloodbrood as he passes by the unfriendly village of Kingsfolly. On the outskirts of the Celeros forest the group is halted by an old acquaintance named Marcel Devon, leading a group of Way Watchers from the Almsberg Rangers Guild. Marcel claims that Cultist activities have greatly increased in the area and the Republic is paying them to guard the route through the Celeros forest to help take the pressure off while the Republican army deals with threats elsewhere throughout the Continent. He thinks the Republic is being foolish and fails to recognize the threat that this new and fast growing cult poses. He also mentions a rumor that one organization is at least taking things seriously and that

a Paladin order from Telestra is massing its forces in Hindin in preparation for a crusade to stamp out the Cult of Cerebus. Seleena and Bloodbrood confirm this when they recall seeing a large number of Paladins in Hindin as they passed through. The conversation is cut short when one of Marcel's scouts reports seeing a large group of cultists, numbering at least 16 men, brazenly heading this way on the highway. Marcel only has 4 rangers and so asks for the group's help in defeating the cultists. After a massive battle they discover a letter giving information that an attack on the nearby village of Welville is eminent. Marcel says they cannot leave their post so the group must travel to Welville on their own and warn the villagers. In Welville they meet a monk named Bartholomew who claims he might have information about Bloodbrood's past. The monk helps them defend the village but after killing the leader he turns into a cult-spawn and kills the monk. With his dying breath he sends them to see the Assilian Monks of Cloudspire Abbey. The next day the village is again attacked, this time by High Elven Knights calling themselves the Riders of Ilethin, sworn to purge the taint of Cerebus from the village by flame. The heroes attack and fight them off, with the timely arrival of a Republican Army Cavalry Brigade which was dispatched to protect the village. Battle 1: Rangers vs. Cultists, Battle 2: Cultist raiders, Battle 3: Spawn, Battle 4: High Elves

Chapter Six: Answers at Last

The group makes the dangerous journey to Cloudspire Abbey. They are not long on their journey when they encounter two scouts of the Riders of Ilethin; they recognize the group from descriptions given from the battle at Welville, the attempt to purge the group of the 'taint'. Upon arriving at the Abbey, the monks deny them entry unless they prove they have honest intentions. They ask the group to bring them 3 yeti hides, highly prized for cloaks in the harsh mountainous climate. They also warn the group that a band of Troggs has been spotted in the area and that the scent of blood might catch their attention. After completing the errand for the monks they are allowed entry where Abbot Timis tells his tale. On the return trip they encounter Theseus for a second time, who has become much stronger since they first met, but the group manages to best him even with the untimely arrival of the Troggs. Once again he escapes. Battle 1: Riders of Ilethin Battle 2: Yetis, Battle 3: Theseus/Troggs

Between these events Bloodbrood and Taylor (after a few mugs of Ale) go to investigate a cultist meeting inside the city of Almsberg. After narrowly escape death at the hands of the cultists when Taylor's cover gets blown, the two friends discover that there is a more sinister agent behind the meeting. Rushing to another location to intercept what was intended to be a night of human sacrifice (stopping to buyout a local alchemist's supply of potions along the way) they find a dark priestess. The priestess of Cerabus summons a demon to defend her but the Gluttonous demon devours her and then turns on Taylor and Bloodbrood. The battle is fierce but eventually the companions triumph, though only barely. They vow never to go charging off without their female companions ever again.

Several weeks later Bloodbrood is tasked with assisting in an investigation of several suspicious deaths where the bodies seem to have been burned with an unnatural fire. Initially it is believed that a rogue pyromancer is responsible but eventually the investigation leads to a cultist summoner acting under orders to sow chaos in Almsberg by unleashing hellhounds. With help from Seleena, Taylor, and Ebonethia the summoner is defeated and an ambush is laid for his superiors who arrive to check on his progress. Once the cultists discover the trap they begin

summoning in various demons to defend themselves, the battle is extremely long but in the end they are no match for the heroes.

Chapter Seven: Hargast's Bargain

Cult of Cerabus kidnaps Selena's father, Hargast, the Chief Druid of the Conclave of Vahlin's Earth. Selena finds a note from her father forbidding her or any of the other druids from going after him, that he went willingly and intends to try to reason with the cult's leader, who as it turns out is a former Druid of Vahlin's Earth. Learning of the situation brewing and the potential existence of this renegade druid, but yet not wanting to interfere in what is turning into a holy war, the College of Pyromancy asks that Bloodbrood bring evidence that warrants that the Vestin college should get involved. Selena decides to go after her father anyways, with the help of her friends, heading into the Celeros forest to as a secluded spot that she knows her father often spends time at.

From here they pick up a trail that leads to a small cultist camp. They defeat them but as they recover from the battle they hear horns sounding from all directions. Moments later they find themselves surrounded by an entire Echelon of Riders of Ilethin, lead by Knight-Captain Thindalon. The group has no choice but to surrender. Their weapons and equipment are taken from them and while they discuss what to do with their prisoners a scouts comes riding in. He speaks in High Elven so the group does not know what he says but the High Elf leader starts barking orders and four out of five cadres charge off into the forest. Knight-Captain Thindolan orders one of his Cavaliers to stay behind with the remaining Cadre of knights and execute the prisoners, purging the demon taint from them, and then follows after his men.

The remaining Riders of Ilethin pile up wood and oil around their captives and are about to set them ablaze when Cavalier Alethalian has second thoughts, believing this to be a dishonor to the name of Ilethin the Demon-Slayer. He orders his men to stand down and free the prisoners. The Knights are hesitant to do so but the Cavalier orders them again, more forcibly. As their bonds are being cut one of the Knights disobeys the order and grabs for the discarded torch. Cavalier Alethalian draws his sword and bats the torch out of his subordinates hand with the flat of his blade. All of the remaining knights turn on Alethalian who urges the companions to grab their belongings and flee if they hope to live. They overpower the elves with Alethalian's help and at his request he and any survivors are captured, to be brought to Almsberg to face justice for their crimes.

Just outside of Almsberg however the group is attacked by a vigilante mob, seeking retribution for the massacre and razing of Talos. The group must defend themselves and their prisoners from the mob, led by a Justicar wielding the "Hammer of Souls", a powerful weapon infused with the lost-souls of Talos. Once the battle is won their rush into Almsberg and deliver their prisoners to the authorities. Before being dragged off to prison the lead high elf tells them about the Lens of Farsight "Find it before the cultist do or all will be lost.

Battle1: Cultist Camp, Battle2: Riders of Ilethin, Battle3: Vigilante Mob w/ Justicar

Chapter Eight: A Race in the Dark

Blood-brood seeks an audience with Mastermage Hothstein, who is among other things a historian specializing in knowledge of magical artifacts. It takes him some time to find a reference to the artifact known as the Lens of Farsight. While its origins and purpose are unknown to Hothstein he is able to discover the supposed location of the artifact. He notes however that it was purposely hidden in an underground vault and is protected by multiple layers

of security, none of which are detailed in his texts. The entrance to the vault is said to be located near the ruined Temple of As'paris, which in the text is said to reside within the Celeros forest. Selena and Blood-brood both suspect this is very same ruined temple which they traveled to on the day they first met, where Seleena discovered the strange glowing mace. So the party journeys to the ruined temple. They do not have to search long to find what appears to be a newly excavated pit, at the bottom of which is an ancient stone door, marked with worn High Elven script. The door has been opened and it is easy to see that a group of people have entered the dusty hall beyond. The group works their way through a test of courage, followed by a test of wisdom, and then finds themselves face to face with the group that entered before them. It is cultists, they seem to be after the artifact as Cavalier Alethalian predicted. They have been denied entry by the final test, that of intention. Whatever ancient power that governs this place seems to think that their intention for seeking the Lens of Farsight is not worthy. Among the Cultists is a renegade mage bearing Mastermage Tolith's seal on his hand. Once the cultists are defeated and the group passes the third test they proceed into the final chamber. Here an ancient beast has been locked away in slumber for untold centuries, it is eager to consume the intruders. As they deal the killing blow and the beast collapses they see a cultist, with a flowing black cloak, pluck the Lens of Farsight from the pedestal it sits upon. Before they can act he throws a scroll upon the ground and mutters something in the demonic tongue. A doorway of billowing smoke appears which he steps through and disappears. Despite their efforts the cultists now have the Lens of Farsight. What they intend to do with it is unknown. The group returns to the College of Pyromancy to inform them what has happened and that among the ranks of cultists they found a renegade mage, who was in fact a former apprentice of Tolith's. With this new news and with the further urging of Mastermage Hothstein the Vestin College agrees to join the fight. Test1: Courage, Test2: Wisdom, Battle1: Cultist party, Test3: Intention, Battle2: 6 headed Hydra

Chapter Nine: The Hammer Falls

There is a meeting in Almsberg between mages of the Vestin College and druids of Vahlin's Earth. While the Republican Army and the Order of the Red Hawk seem to continue to wait for a pitched battle that may or may not come, these two organizations decide it is time to act. They plan to send a small force into the heart of the Cults base of operations with the intention of bringing back, dead or alive, Fulgrum Underthorn, the Druid Mystic that Hargast believed was the leader of the cult, along with any other renegade magic users in his ranks. Based on scout reports from Marcel Devon and the Almsberg Rangers, the cult seems to be using the ruins of Drakkus as a base of operations, perhaps due to its close proximity to the former Bloodshrine. Seleena immediately volunteers to go, secretly hoping she can discover what has become of her father. The Mage Wardens also want to send one of their agents; however they insist that the young Spellsworn Bloodbrood is not ready to face these powerful renegades. Though he protests he is forbidden from accompanying Seleena. She is sent on her way with an Undermage and a Mage Warden, almost immediately. All three are given cultist disguises to allow them to penetrate deep inside the ruins.

Meanwhile Bloodbrood, enraged at being forbidden to accompany Seleena, is discovered packing his bags and preparing to follow after them by High Curator Goleg himself. Surprisingly he secretly encourages Bloodbrood to go after her. Stopping off to enlist the aid of his loyal friends Taylor and Ebonethia they head off to the Ruins of Drakkus, with no real plan, except to catch up with Seleena.

As Seleena & her escorts approach the ruins they appear strangely quiet. Approaching what was once the main gate of the city they enter, only to be challenged by previously hidden sentries. They immediately see through the disguise, as every true cultist knows not to approach through the main gate. In the ensuing battle the escorts are slain, and Seleena is captured. She regains consciousness in a subterranean dungeon, being nursed back to health by her father. Seleena asks her Father what has happened since he arrived. He tells her that Fulgrum lured him here not to join him but rather to act as a powerful blood sacrifice. One that could then be channeled through the Lens of Farsight and projected into the heavens to summon back Cerabus from whatever distant place he resides. Regardless of the cost this must be prevented. He has contemplated taking his own life in order to deny Fulgrum the sacrifice, but that will likely just delay the inevitable, or with Seleena's arrival but her at risk of the same gruesome fate at the hands of Fulgrum. Instead Hargast has decided he must destroy the Lens. Just then cultist guards arrive and take him away, it is the appointed time for his ritual sacrifice. In utter despair, Seleena finds herself alone and behind bars, unable to prevent her Father's death.

Bloodbrood arrives on the scene at the gates too late, seeing one last conflagration in the distance as the fire mage escorts fall. By the time they reach the ruined gates the sentries are gone, along with Seleena. Hers is the only body not accounted for. With the sentries occupied however the group gains entrance to the ruins easily and heads for the heart of the ruined city, keeping to the shadows to avoid detection. They are discovered at one point by a small patrol, after defeating them, Bloodbrood forces the cultist to tell him where they can find Seleena.

Meanwhile Seleena sits in darkness; she hears nothing except for the sounds of coarse laughter from the Cultists down the hall guarding the dungeon. She does the only thing she can, she prays and asks Vahlin to deliver her. So desperately she prays that at first she does not hear Him call her name. So he gently repeats Himself. "Seleena, my faithful servant, do not be troubled. For even here in your darkest hour I am near. The Earth and Stone beneath your feet were made by My hand, and so too shall they be undone." The ground begins to violently shake, dust and debris showers down upon Seleena and she fears the roof above her may collapse. But as suddenly as the earthquake began it stops. She hears the sound of ancient hinges squeaking and turns to see the door to her cell swinging open. Stepping out into the hall she finds her belongings still laying there discarded, after the cultist took what they wanted. There is a cry of alarm down the hallway as the cultists realize she has escaped. They rush towards her. Weak and outnumbered she turns to face them. However Cultists stop in their tracks when from behind them they hear the bellowing roar of a Minotaur. The summoner amongst them pleads with his comrades that they should give up rather than face the beast. They curse him for a coward and with a single blow they hack the summoner's head off. Shortly after, as they battle the remaining guards, a monstrous anger demon spawns from the summoner's corpse.

Once they have defeated the prison guards Seleena brings them up to speed on what her father told her. As they leave the dungeon and come back to the surface they are greeted with an unusual sight. A blood red beam of light is shooting straight up into the night sky from behind a series of ruined buildings nearby. The beam of light is quite wide but it seems to slowly be narrowing, as if it were trying to focus on something. The group rushes to investigate. They pass through a series of broken arches and columns and find themselves on a wide open stone floor with a raised dais, possibly the former throne room of King Helios himself, a fitting spot to call

back the demon prince with whom Helios struck his dark bargain. It is here that they see the source of the strange light. On the dais there is a low table on which Hargast, Chief Druid of the Conclave of Vahlin's Earth, lays motionless. Both his wrists have been slit and his life's blood is slowing trickling out, leaving an every widening stain of red running down the table and pooling around the dais. From his extremely pale complexion it is clear he is very near death. Standing over Hargast is a robed figure, chanting in the demon tongue and holding the Lens of Farsight over the bleeding form of Hargast. It is from the Lens that the blood red light is emanating, slowly but surely focusing its beam and blasting deeper and deeper into the heavens. The cultists spot the group and rush to defend their leader so that his ritual is not interrupted.

By the time the battle is over and the Heroes victorious, the beam of light has focused into a single pinprick of intense red light which pierces the night sky. As the group approaches and tries to stop him, Fulgrum Underthorn, Druid Mystic and Leader of the Cult of Cerabus, casts the Lens aside landing on the blood drenched stone dais and shattering. Fulgrum turns to face the group, but as he does so his face begins to contort and swell into a fierce demonic visage. He speaks, but not with the voice of any dwarf, "You are too late mortals. For too long I have ignored your tiny world. But my servant has called me back, and you will pay the blood debt! Fulgrum destroy them." Suddenly the demonic visage dissipates and Fulgrum appears himself again, with the exception of his blood red eyes, and says simply, "yes my master..."

Having easily defeated the heroes Fulgrum picks Seleena up by the throat, electrical energy coursing across his body. "I will enjoy watching you die, just as I watched father die to summon back my lord Cerabus." Seleena screams as Fulgrum slowing begins to cook her from the inside out. At the sound of her scream, Hargast's eyes fly open and he bolts upright. In a feeble yet determined voice Hargast bellows, "Fulgrum! As you have failed to kill me so shall you fail to kill my daughter." The wicked expression on Fulgrum's face suddenly turns to one of shock as two bloodied arms wrap around him and his entire body begins to transform into stone. As a last ditch attempt to protect himself Fulgrum tosses aside Seleena and focuses his electrical energies on Hargast. Now caught in the electrical field Hargast is unable to let go of Fulgrum and watches helplessly as his arms also begin to turn to stone. Seleena rushes to his side along with her roused companions. By now Fulgrum has been completely petrified, however the stone transformation is still slowly creeping across Hargast's body.

"My child we have precious moments only, I have not the strength left to prevent my transformation. I could not stop it, already Cerabus can be seen approaching like a flash of fire across the sky. He must be stopped at any cost or his blood-thirst will consume us all..." Over head a ball of fire can be seen, in the night sky, growing steadily larger. The stone is now creeping up Hargast's neck, making it difficult to speak. "Run my child; flee this place before it is too late. Muster what allies you can and never forget you... are... my... daughter..." With his final breath Hargast's transformation is complete. He stands now as a statue locked in eternal combat with his former friend, turned enemy by the lying tongue of Cerabus the Bloodthirster.

Just as the group escapes the ruins and begins to head back to Almsberg, over head the night sky begins to brighten as a sickly mockery of day. A massive fire ball streams across the sky and crashes in the nearby remains of the Blood Shrine, sending sparks and debris flying in all

directions. Like a massive burning hammer falling from the sky, Cerabus returns once more to slake his blood thirst upon mankind.

Battle1: Mock battle, Seleena & Escorts vs. Cultist Sentries (Seleena gains 35exp)

Battle 2: Bloodbrood, Taylor, Ebonethia vs. Cultists Patrol

Battle 3: Prison Break

Battle 4: Showdown with Renegades

Battle 5: partial mock battle, empowered Fulgrum