

# FLESHING OUT CURSE OF STRAHD: ST. ANDRAL'S ORPHANAGE

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VALLAKI

An Adventure by MandyMod



# FORWARD



Welcome to the orphanage. This module was designed to be inserted into the main *Curse of Strahd* campaign, in the centralized town of Vallaki. This chapter provides Vallaki with some additional pacing before the events of St. Andral's Feast and the Festival of the Blazing Sun.

By moving Milivoj, the gravedigger, to a separate location, players have more time and incentive to explore and interact with Vallaki's various plot hooks and NPCs.

Additionally, St. Andral's Orphanage provides the following:

- A plot hook to the Werewolf Den
- A potential introduction for players on the Demiplanes of Dread
- Additional story pacing for the Bones of St. Andral quest
- An appropriate location to leave the rescued children from Old Bonegrinder
- An expanded use for Milivoj the Gravedigger

In this adventure, players search for Milivoj at the orphanage, only to discover he is incapacitated by an unexplained illness. As players look for a cause and a cure, they will also find the shrewd headmistress, Ms. Belasco, and evidence of abuse among the orphans.

However, as they investigate, players will soon find that things are not what they seem and that the orphanage's true evil lies with a possessed child named Felix.

## MAPS

I, MandyMod, created all the maps for this adventure using Adobe Photoshop and Mike Schley's asset set. Find the maps, both DM and Player Friendly versions, on imgur: [LINK](#)

## ADAPTING THE ADVENTURE OUTSIDE *CURSE OF STRAHD*

It is entirely possible to run St. Andral's Orphanage as a stand alone adventure or incorporate it into another campaign. NPC names can easily be changed to better fit another setting.

As a one shot adventure, St. Andral's Orphange is designed for 3-5 players of levels 4-5. To provide an immediate hook for players, Milivoj is now a suspect in Cedrik's murder. When players find Milivoj too sick to answer their inquiries, they'll have to search elsewhere in the orphanage for answers.

## CREDITS

This adventure was originally created and posted on Reddit under the [r/CurseofStrahd](#) subreddit. Find the original post and my other work under my Reddit username, [u/MandyMod](#).

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I would personally like to thank both my editors and the entirety of my followers on the subreddit for your ongoing support and feedback. I love you guys from the bottom of my heart.

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# N10. ST. ANDRAL'S ORPHANAGE

The Orphanage is home to Milivoj the gravedigger, Headmistress Claudia Belasco, and almost two dozen orphans. The Orphanage's most recent addition, an eight-year-old boy named Felix, is possessed by a demon and has been hurting the other children.

Using Felix as a humanoid vessel, the demon has been secretly tormenting the other children, giving them night terrors and feeding off their souls, leaving terrible bruising and wounds behind. It is also responsible for the murder of another orphan named Cedrik, which was ruled as an accident.

An overtone of fear has shrouded the orphanage since Felix's arrival. Three boys - Lazlo, Hans, and Franz - recently fled the Orphanage for fear of the Headmistress, and are currently being held captive at the Werewolf Den. Milivoj has fallen gravely ill. The demon shall soon claim Milivoj's soul and be truly free unless something is done to stop it.

## ORPHANAGE ADVENTURE HOOKS

**Finding the Bones of St. Andral.** The easiest way to hook your players into the orphanage is to use Milivoj, the gravedigger at the Church of St. Andral. When your players go to question Milivoj about the missing bones, Father Lucian will tell the party that they can find the young man at the orphanage and that he hasn't shown up to work for several days.

**Old Bonegrinder Orphans.** If the players had an encounter with the hags at Old Bonegrinder, they may leave the windmill with 1-3 new children in tow: Myrtle, Freek, and Lucian.

Once arriving in Vallaki, the PCs will be looking for a place to safely leave the children they've rescued. The orphanage is an obvious solution for that.

## RESIDENTS OF THE ORPHANAGE

**Headmistress Claudia Belasco.** A shrewd woman in her early fifties, Ms. Belasco loves propriety and order. She wears her grey streaked brown hair up in a tight bun and has developed fine wrinkles around her mouth from years of disapproving frowns.

The orphans aren't particularly fond of Ms. Belasco as she is the primary source of discipline in the house. They've taken to calling her, Ms. Witch, behind her back and the elder kids tell nasty stories about Ms. Belasco eating naughty children in her meals. Despite her general unlikable nature, Ms. Belasco cares for her children very much. She long ago stopped worrying about being liked in return. As long as the orphans are safe and healthy, Ms. Belasco will give out as many lectures as she sees fit.

Ms. Belasco knows something is wrong at the orphanage and is doing her best to discover the source of their recent string of bad luck. She rightly believes that Cedrik's death was no accident and found a mysterious locket on his body which she suspects is evil. She also worries that Felix may not be totally sane, but will only share this information with someone she truly trusts.

If the players get on her good side, possibly by showing their similar and heartfelt concern for the orphans, she'll share what little information she's gathered.

**Felix.** Felix has only lived at the orphanage for the past few months. Prior to his arrival, Felix happened upon a cursed locket and released a demon trapped inside. The demon possessed Felix and made him murder his own parents, sending him to St. Andral's Orphanage.

Felix's demon was sealed within the locket by a cleric who was unable to conquer it. While the demon has great power now that it has a humanoid vessel, it is still not technically free of the locket. Only by devouring an exceptionally strong soul can it finally find release. The illness that is slowly killing Milivoj is actually the draining of his soul. When Milivoj dies, the ritual will be complete and the demon will slaughter the residents of the orphanage. Currently, Felix isn't Felix. He's the demon. He acts like a young sociopath with a talent for falsehoods. His emotional range is quite shallow and he shows almost no sympathy for the plights of others, smiling if Cedrik's death is mentioned.

Quote: *"I don't see why everyone was so upset when Cedrik died. I saw his body. He only bled a little bit. My parents bled a lot more than that and I'm fine."*

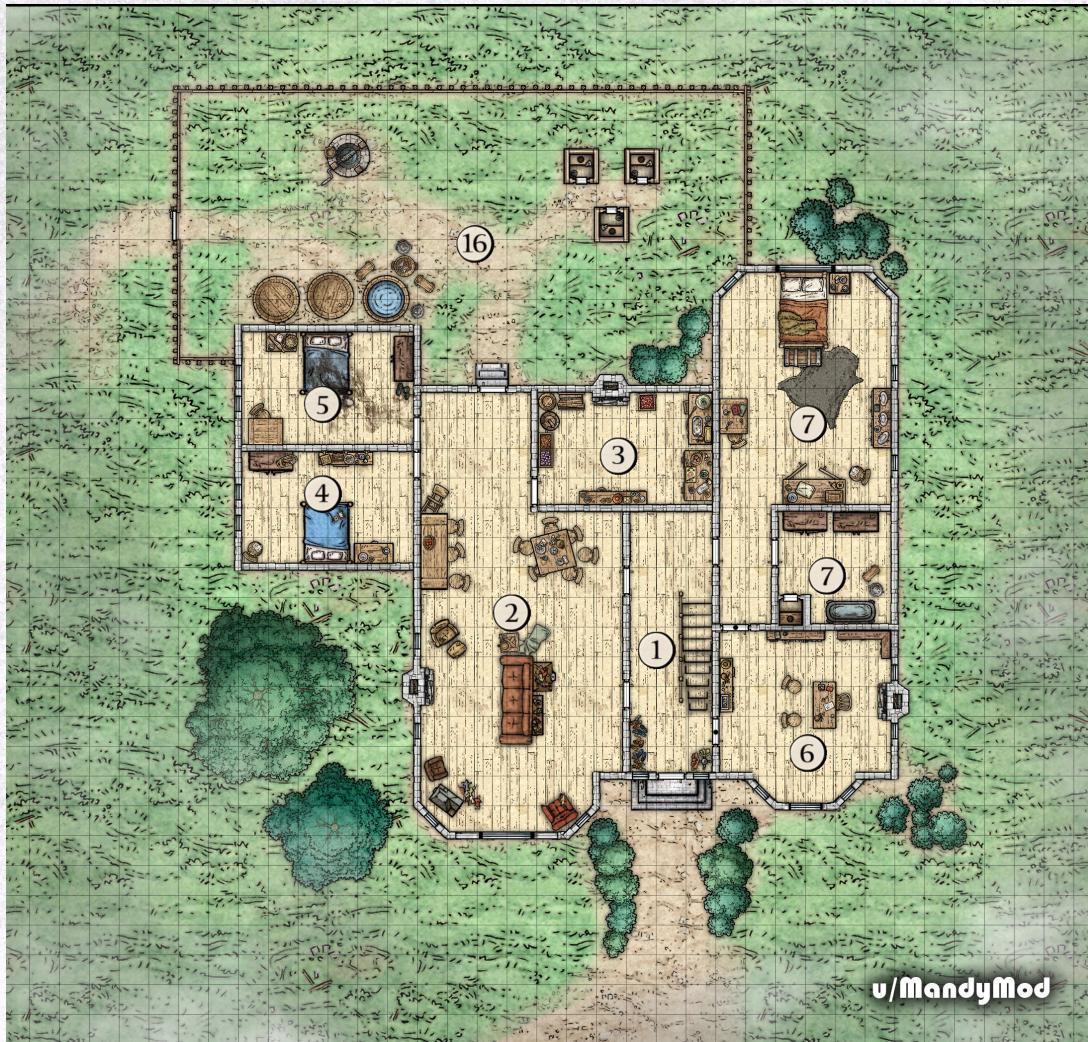
**Milivoj.** (LG Human Commoner with Strength 15 (+2) for the sake of this adventure). A former orphan and resident at the orphanage, Milivoj now lives at the orphanage as a caretaker and helps care for the children. Milivoj gives whatever meager earnings he gains to help support the house and care for his foster siblings. The children love him and revere him as their elder brother. Milivoj is nineteen years old, jaded, and sullen. But when it comes to the other children, he instantly mellows.

Unfortunately, the strength of Milivoj's compassion for the children of the orphanage also drew the attention of Felix's demon. Shortly after Felix's arrival, the demon began nibbling at Milivoj's soul, making him sick. What began as a slight cough slowly escalated. Milivoj eventually could barely keep up with his work and agreed to steal the Bones of St. Andral to make up for his lost wages. He used the gold he had left from the job to employ the wolf hunters, Szoldar and Yevgeni, to find the runaway boys and desperately hopes the three children are returned to the orphanage safely. Milivoj has since been completely incapacitated by the illness.

If nothing is done about the demon, Milivoj will die and the secret of the bones' location will die with him.

**The Other Orphans.** Many of the orphans sport various bruises and mild injuries. These come from Felix's demon feeding on their life force in the night. None of the children have any idea how they received their injuries.

All the children have been suffering from horrific night terrors. Most nights are interrupted by more than one terrified scream.



## AREAS OF THE ORPHANAGE

### N10.1 FIRST-FLOOR HALLWAY

The front hallway is wood-paneled and dimly lit. The wooden floors are old and worn and the steps of the main staircase sag with age. A pile of children's shoes lays by the western wall.

### N10.2 MAIN LIVING AREA

The orphanage's main living area features a old couch, a few mismatched stuffed chairs, chests crammed with worn toys, and two small dining tables surrounded by chairs. Three young girls crowd around a dollhouse in the south of the room. An older boy paces the room with a toddler on each hip as he tries to sooth them. Another boy and girl are playing a game of tag and chase each other around the furniture. An older girl sits on the couch and reads aloud to four more gathered toddlers. The room is a den of chaos and noise.

This room is the social hub of the orphanage.

One of the little girls playing dollhouse has a series of splotchy bruises up and down her arms. The older girl reading to the toddlers rubs at her lower back every few minutes. If her back is examined, she has a red, irritated and distinctly inhuman bite mark there. Neither girl remembers how they received the injuries.

### N10.3 KITCHEN

This small, cramped kitchen is filled with everything you might need to cook a meal in bulk.

A knife block sits on a high shelf, out of reach for most children. The slot for the biggest knife is empty.

### N10.4 CARETAKER'S BEDROOM

This room smells like mothballs. The bed is covered with a crocheted quilt and a framed doily hangs on the wall.

This room belonged to the former caretaker of the orphanage who died of old age several months ago. Their position has yet to be replaced.

## N10.5 MILIVOJ'S BEDROOM

This bedroom is sparsely furnished. The floors are covered with dirt and an old shovel lies on the ground at the foot of the bed. A sickly young man sleeps fitfully. He is covered in sweat from fever and has blood mixed bile on his lips. His pallor is yellow tinged and deathly pale.

The sick man is Milivoj. Felix's demon is slowly devouring Milivoj's soul in order to break free from the locket. The loss of his soul is making Milivoj more and more ill.

If players investigate Milivoj, they find (with a DC 14 Arcana or Medicine check) that his condition is both magical in nature and not contagious. Using a spell like *Detect Magic* will reveal traces of necromancy magic as if from a *Bestow Curse* spell. Divine Sense might reveal the unstable aura of a fiend.

Healing magic and healing potions have no effect on Milivoj. His illness can only be cured by a *Greater Restoration* spell or the elimination of the demon.

## N10.6 MS. BELASCO'S OFFICE

The door from the hallway leading into this room bears a plaque reading, "Headmistress Claudia Belasco."

Both doors to this room are locked (DC 15 with Thieves' Tools, DC 20 Athletics to break down). If the players enter the office they see the following:

This appears to be a relatively modest office space, featuring a desk set in front of an aged fireplace. The bookshelves lining the north wall appear to contain mostly official documents and volumes.

The bookshelves contain volumes chronicling the many residents of the orphanage over the years. Within the most recent journal is a report documenting that Felix's parents were both brutally murdered and the killer never caught.

Felix's cursed locket is in the top drawer of Ms. Belasco's desk and emits a faint aura of necromancy.

**The Demon's Locket:** *This rusted tin locket is in the shape of a circle with an "X" scratched into the lid. It hangs on an old tin chain, and the inside is engraved with an inscription in Celestial that means "Let darkness hide from the gaze of the light."*

## N10.7 MS. BELASCO'S SUITE AND BATHROOM

While modest in broad standards, this bedroom is quite nice compared to the rest of the orphanage. These quarters are spotless and meticulously organized. The furnishings include a large bed, a wardrobe, a chest of drawers, and a table with two books resting on top.

Ms. Belasco has recently acquired some books in an effort to figure out the cause behind the happenings in the orphanage:

*Toxic Parenting: The Hurtful Legacy of Corporal Punishment* details several abusive practices in parenting children and their negative effects. Ms. Belasco has been trying to understand who or what might be hurting the children. She also hopes to better understand Felix's strange demeanor.

*Beyond the Morning Lord's Sight* is a thin book detailing the basics of demons and demon worship, including the barest basics of Abyssal and Infernal languages. A further DC 18 Intelligence (History) check (DC12 if the PC already speaks Abyssal or Infernal) will reveal that most of the information in this book is false. Ms. Belasco found the runes carved into Cedrik's bed after his death. She suspects they had some cause in the tragedy.

## N10.8 SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY

The second floor hallway has six different doors, most of which are left wide open. Only the single door at the north end of the hall is closed. There's also a hatch on the ceiling at the southern end of the room. The hallway's only window on the southern wall is broken and boarded up.

The hatch on the ceiling leads to the attic (Area N10.15).

The window at the end of the hall is the one from which Cedrik fell to his death. It has yet to be repaired. If players examine the broken window (Investigation DC 15), they can see light fingernail scratches on the inside of the sill where Cedrik resisted Felix before he was pushed out.

## N10.9 ELDER GIRLS' DORMITORY

Four beds fit snugly into this room. Two of the beds hold smiling, red-cheeked dolls with straw hair.

This room houses the four eldest girls in the house, ages 12-16.

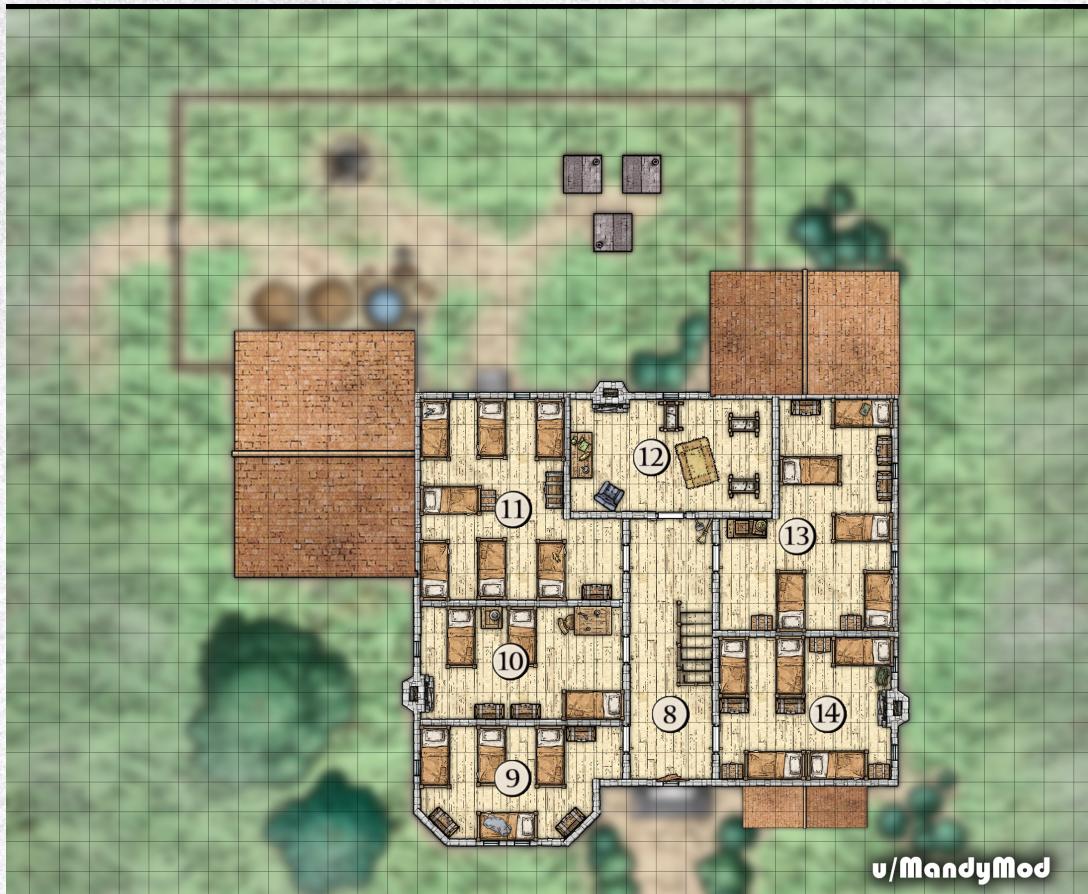
If players investigate the room and pass a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check (DC10 if PCs are looking specifically for them), they can find small Infernal runes scratched onto one bedpost on each bed. They loosely translate to "Dark Dreams." Felix uses the runes to influence the sleeper's dreams at night.

## N10.10 ELDER BOYS' DORMITORY

This small room contains three beds. A windowsill holds a quartet of small figurines assembled from twigs.

This room houses the three eldest boys in the orphanage, ages 12-16.

If players investigate the room and pass a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check (DC10 if PCs are looking specifically for them), they can find small Infernal runes scratched onto one bedpost on each bed. They loosely translate to "Dark Dreams."



**u/MandyMod**

### N10.11 TODDLERS' DORMITORY

This back bedroom is crammed with cots, leaving little room for other furnishings. A few dolls lay on the beds.

This is where the toddlers sleep at night (ages 2-5).

If players investigate the room and pass a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check (DC10 if PCs are looking specifically for them), they can find small Infernal runes scratched onto one bedpost on each bed. They loosely translate to "Dark Dreams."

### N10.12 NURSERY

The door to this room is closed but unlocked. If opened, the players find the following:

This nursery contains three cribs, a chest of drawers, and an old stuffed chair. Two babies sleep peacefully in two of the cribs. A teenage girl holds the third baby and gently hums an unknown lullaby. Another young girl sits on the floor and reads quietly.

The girls in this room are Fanya (16) and Tessa (10). Fanya is the primary caregiver in the nursery and Tessa often joins her to read in peace.

Tessa has visible bruising on her arms. Tessa was Cedrik's closest friend before he died. While he picked on the other children in the house, he had a crush on Tessa and spoke with her often. She can tell the players that shortly before his death, Cedrik stole a locket from his bunkmate, Felix, whom she thinks is very weird.

### N10.13 YOUNGER GIRLS' DORMITORY

This bedroom contains five beds.

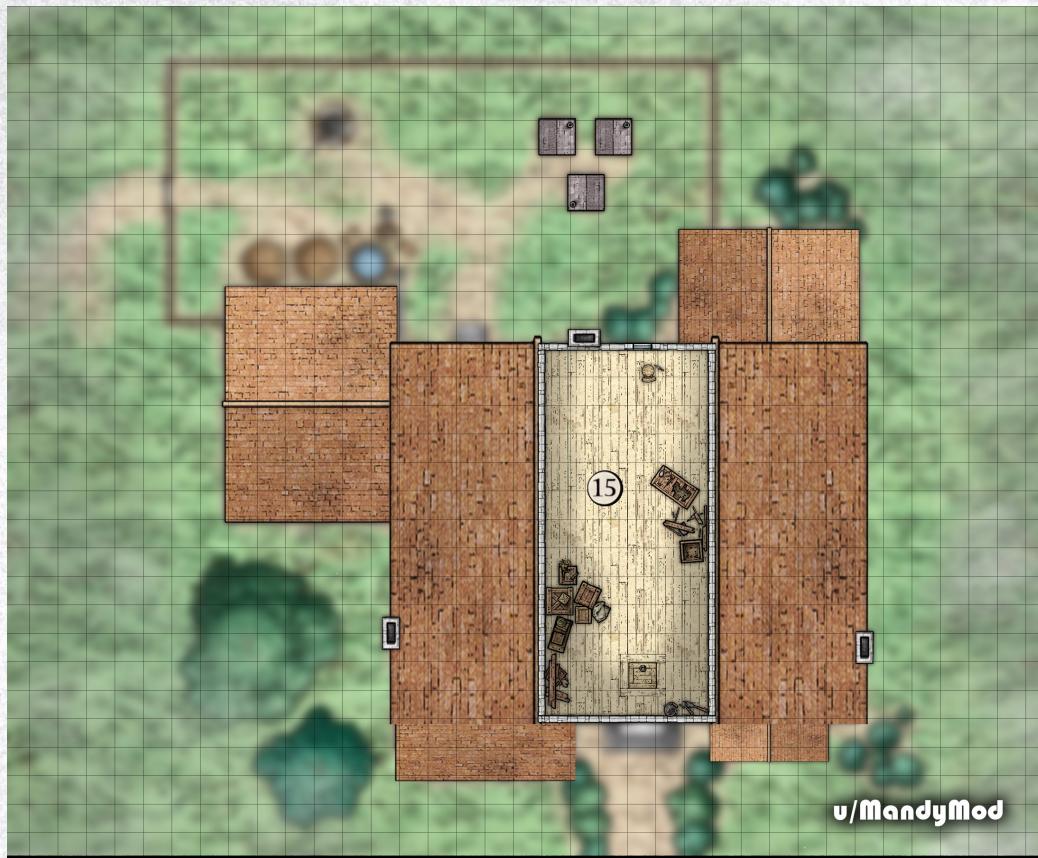
The younger girls, ages 6-11 sleep here, including Tessa.

If players investigate the room and pass a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check (DC10 if PCs are looking specifically for them), they can find small Infernal runes scratched onto one bedpost on each bed. They loosely translate to "Dark Dreams."

### N10.14 YOUNGER BOYS' DORMITORY

This bedroom contains five beds, four of which are perfectly made and appear unused.

The younger boys ages 6-11 sleep here. Three of the beds belong to the three boys who ran away and are currently held captive in the Werewolf Den. One of the beds belonged to Cedrik, the boy who died. The final bed belongs to Felix, the only boy left who lives in this dormitory.



If players investigate the room and pass a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check (DC10 if PCs are looking specifically for them), they can find small Infernal runes scratched onto one bedpost on each bed. The runes translate to "Dark Dreams." Felix's bed is the only one without any carvings.

### N10.15 ATTIC

The attic is rather barren of furnishings and otherwise choked with dust and cobwebs. There are a few random piles of clutter, but nothing of much significance. At the far end of the room, by the attic's only window, is a small boy sitting in a lone chair silhouetted by the incoming light.

Felix is busy carving a little wooden doll with a stolen kitchen knife. Felix will only try to fool the party for so long. The demon within him is made more for bloodshed than trickery and the longer the conversation goes on, the more his facade will dissolve. His answers become increasingly more emotionless and he seems more and more volatile. If a player tries to threaten him, Felix laughs at them in derision. He begins to handle the stolen kitchen knife more menacingly.

### N10.16 BACKYARD

The backyard is surrounded by a wooden fence with a single gate on the west side. A trio of outhouses stand on one side of the yard and a well on the other. Three large wash basins are pushed up against the wall of the building, one of which is filled with water. Two teenage girls are busy washing laundry.

The girls here are Hedwig (14) and Ivah (15). They are the local gossips of the orphanage. They know that Felix has some sort of dark past and they gossip about the morbid possibilities.

## FIGHTING FELIX'S DEMON

Should a player make an overtly violent move towards Felix, the demon reveals itself and tries to kill the players. The demon is beyond reason and wants nothing more than bloodshed.

The light coming from the attic's far window seems to dim of its own accord, suppressed by an unnatural, invisible force. A dark, putrid smoke begins to exude from Felix's skin, wafting from his body as an impenetrable shadow. As the boy's body slumps forward, the shadow begins to take form, arms stretching out from the central mass in solid, black claws. A demonic face grins, baring rows of razor sharp teeth.



## IN COMBAT

While in combat, the demon keeps its distance, using its climbing speed to move across the walls while using its Shadow Claws attack to hurt the PCs from a 10-foot distance. Once it grows bloodied, it attempts to use its Life Drain ability to stay conscious, focusing its attentions on the weakest members of the party. It stays as far as possible from any PCs that deal radiant damage, but freely provokes opportunity attacks from those with nonmagical weapons, overconfident in the strength of its own damage resistances.

Though malicious and proud, Felix's demon is far from stupid. It knows that it is bound to the locket and will do everything in its power to be free of its binding. However, it would also much rather be imprisoned than destroyed, and will return to its prison if no other option is available.

When the demon drops below 18 hit points, it returns to possess his body directly, and threatens to slit Felix's throat with the stolen kitchen knife. A canny PC can detect the demon's bluff with a DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check - it will not risk being without a host. If its bluff is called, the demon attempts to flee the battle within Felix's body, hoping the players' unwillingness to hurt the child will save it from further harm.

If Felix dies or the demon is otherwise expelled from its host, it will spend two of its next three turns (as defined by *The Demon's Locket* trait) trying to take the locket and force it into contact with another potential host. If, by its third turn outside the locket, the demon still does not have a host, it willingly returns to the locket to avoid destruction.

## AFTER THE BATTLE

When the demon drops to 0 hit points, the light coming through the attic window suddenly seems a bit brighter.

Felix, if still alive, gasps, falls to his knees, and immediately begins to sob. From this point on, he looks and acts like a normal eight-year-old boy, though heavily traumatized. If asked, he can tell the players how he found the locket and hasn't been in control of his body since. Felix has been in the backseat of his own mind, watching the demon's actions without being able to interfere. He remembers murdering his parents and Cedrik, sneaking into Milivoj's room at night with the locket, and whispering curses at the other orphans to cause them harm.

Milivoj is finally awake, his stolen vitality restored. He is now able to tell the players he stole the bones for the coffin maker, Henrik van der Voort.

Ms. Belasco is extremely thankful her children are finally safe. Unfortunately, she has very little in the way of money with which to reward the party. She does, however, offer them safe haven and lodging at the orphanage should they ever find themselves in need.

Ms. Belasco also gives the party two potions of healing she recently received from the doctor. Milivoj, no longer in danger of dying from illness, no longer needs them.

## THE DEMON

The demon appears as a mass made of black smoke that takes on a vague, elongated form with arms, legs and a head. This shadow form is only semi-corporeal and moves in the same insubstantial way as a ghost. When injured, it bleeds a black, inky substance with an acrid smell.

Felix's demon is a minor entity from the mists. Before coming to Barovia, it mindlessly swam around the Demiplanes of Dread and avoided the freely moving and frighteningly more powerful Dark Powers. Compared to the mightier beings in the mists, this demon is a relatively weak creature. However, it is consumed by its own vanity and believes itself to be quite powerful.

Quote: "*Mortal ants; I have seen the shadows of the Great Powers moving through the Dark Seas around this sphere. Your paltry magics are nothing.*"

## FELIX'S DEMON

Medium fiend, chaotic evil

**Armor Class** 14 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 50 (6d8 + 18)

**Speed** 30 ft., climb 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)

**Skills** Deception +2, Intimidation +2

**Damage Vulnerabilities** radiant

**Damage Resistances** acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Damage Immunities** necrotic, poison

**Condition Immunities** charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Infernal

**Challenge** 4 (1100 XP)

**The Demon's Locket.** The demon is magically connected to this locket, like a genie to a lamp. While inside the locket and while the locket is closed, the demon is unconscious. While inside the locket and while the locket is open, the demon can exit the locket and interact with the world, but only for 3 turns, after which it must return to the locket or be destroyed. This ability recharges after a long rest within the locket.

In order to free itself from the locket, the demon must trade its place in the locket with a pure and compassionate soul (someone of a Lawful Good alignment) in a ritual process that takes approximately 3-4 months.

**Symbiote.** If The Demon's Locket is open and is in physical contact with another creature, the Demon has the ability to possess the creature, using them as a host to remain outside the locket for an extended period of time. If the demon is already outside the locket and the locket is closed, it also has the ability to possess a creature in physical contact with the locket. While possessing a host, the demon can extend itself beyond the possessed body in a metaphysical, shadow-like form, at which point the possessed body slumps over, unconscious. While in this form, the demon can interact with the world, attack, and be targeted by attacks, but must always remain within 30 ft. of its host.

If the demon's host dies or it is otherwise expelled from its host while it is still connected to The Demon's Locket, the demon has 3 turns to either find a new host, return to the locket, or be destroyed as per *The Demon's Locket* trait.

### Actions

**Shadow Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 10 ft., one target. *Hit* 17 (4d6 +3) slashing damage.

**Life Drain (3/Day).** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit* 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. On a hit, the demon gains hit points equal to half the damage done by this attack.

**Possession.** One humanoid that is in contact with The Demon's Locket must succeed on a DC 13 Charisma saving throw or be possessed by the demon as per the *Symbiote* trait. The demon now controls the body but does not deprive the target of awareness or share the target's knowledge or memories. The possession lasts until the body drops to 0 hit points, the demon ends it as a bonus action, or the demon is forced out by an effect like the *dispel evil and good* spell. The target is immune to Possession for 24 hours after succeeding on the saving throw or after the possession ends.

## FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION: HOOK INTO WACHTERHAUS

When the players are leaving the orphanage, Ernst Larnak, Fiona Wachter's spy, approaches. Word has reached Lady Wachter that outsiders have come to town and she wishes to speak with them over dinner. Ernst extends this invitation to the party and offers to escort them across town.

## BUTTERFLY EFFECT: THE DEMON SUCCEEDS

In the event that players do not stop Felix's Demon, you may have the demon reappear later in the campaign, separated from the locket and stronger. You may even spread rumors about a horrible and unexplained massacre at the orphanage.