

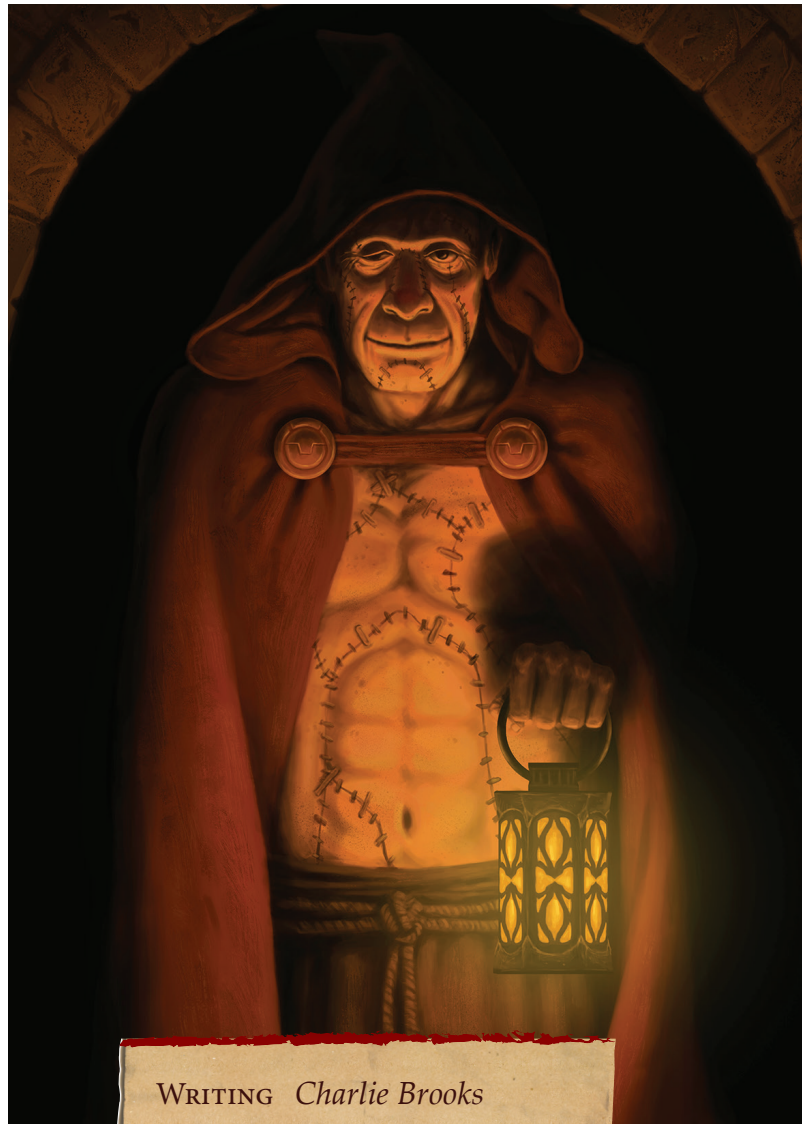
the Guardian Murderer



hen a flesh
golem
unexpectedly
gains sentience
the moment
it kills its

creator's rival, it turns against the very person who gave it life. Now the wizard seeks protection from stalwart adventurers, all while hoping that the hired help doesn't learn the terrible secret of the golem's creation.

This adventure is appropriate for 5th level characters.



PATHFINDER
COMPATIBLE

WRITING Charlie Brooks
COLOR ART Mark Bulahao
EDITING Felipe Real
LAYOUT Xanditz

SETTING THE SCENE

The wizard Betar spent years planning the elimination of his rivals. He built secret laboratories and raided graveyards, gathering the components he needed to build a deadly killing machine. Finally, a week ago, Betar sent a flesh golem assassin to slay his most potent rival, a sorcerer named Ursula. But even with his careful planning, he couldn't foresee the unexpected consequences of his actions.

The golem went berserk during the battle against Ursula. Unexpectedly, the frenzy awakened echoes of the person the golem had once been. The monster gained sentience at the very moment it delivered the killing blow.

Faced with such trauma, the golem swore revenge on its creator for making it a murderer. Betar later pieced together the details of what had happened. The wizard now seeks protectors, while also hoping that they never find out the secrets that led to the creation of his guardian murderer.

INVOLVING THE PCs

The easiest way to get the PCs involved in this adventure is for Betar to hire them for protection. Failing that, the PCs might come across the wizard when investigating a rash of break-ins at alchemical shops, driven by the golem's search for bottled lightning to heal itself. In this case, the adventurers may meet Betar as a consultant or even a suspect.

THE ROOFTOP ASSASSIN

The adventure begins as the PCs meet Betar in his home, a four-story tower nestled within a large city. Regardless of the reason for the adventurers' arrival, Betar escorts them to a sitting room upstairs. He then gives his account of the events.

According to Betar's story, the wizard believes that somebody has marked him for death. Just yesterday he noticed a large cloaked

figure following him as he traversed the streets, and a runaway carriage nearly ran him over. Whether the PCs came on his invitation or not, Betar offers them 100 gp if they can identify and destroy his would-be killer.

PCs who pay close attention to Betar can attempt a **DC 22 Perception check**. On a success they notice that he does seem genuinely distressed, but that he fidgets uncomfortably whenever he discusses details of the potential killer. He also consistently refers to the potential assassin as "it," never using other pronouns.

As Betar speaks, ask the PCs to make a **DC 20 Perception check**. Those who succeed notice a large cloaked figure on a nearby rooftop aiming a heavy crossbow at the wizard. One PC who succeeded at the Perception check can attempt a **DC 20 Athletics check** to throw Betar out of the way. If the PC succeeds, the wizard takes no damage from the incoming bolt and casts *haste* to assist in the upcoming pursuit. If the PC fails, the attack hits Betar, but fails to kill him.

IN HOT PURSUIT

The golem's crossbow bolt shatters a window in Betar's tower and allows the PCs to identify its precise location. Once the golem realizes that it has failed to kill Betar, it drops the crossbow and attempts to escape. The PCs have a chance to chase it down.

The golem leaps from rooftop to rooftop as it races toward its hideout in the city's aqueducts. Each PC has five rounds during which to pursue the golem. For each round that passes, a PC may attempt a **DC 20 Acrobatics or Athletics check** to remain in pursuit. Every successful check nets the PC **1 Pursuit Point (PP)** or **2 PP** on a critical success. Additional factors, detailed below, can also influence the chase.

❖ **Taking the Stairs:** Jumping out the tower window results in a fall of 15 feet, but allows a character to avoid falling behind. A character who runs down the stairs to avoid the fall loses one round of actions in the pursuit.

- ❖ **Providing Assistance:** Each round, the PC may attempt a Perception check to **Aid** one ally. If the ally successfully gains PP, the PC who Aids also gains **1 PP** (but cannot gain 2 PP from a critical success).
- ❖ **Flight:** A flying character can gain a +5 circumstance bonus to Perception checks to **Aid** or can instead automatically gain **1 PP** per round of pursuit.

- ❖ **Quickened Movement:** Any effect that grants a PC an extra action to Stride (such as *haste*) gains **3 PPs**.

How quickly each PC catches up to the golem depends on that character's total PPs at the end of five rounds:

10 PP or more: The PC gets in front of the golem and cuts it off from its hideout. The next encounter occurs in the open, and the PC gains a +2 circumstance bonus to initiative when encounter mode begins.

7 PP to 9 PP: The PC witnesses the golem fleeing into the aqueducts. Nobody receives any bonuses or penalties to initiative when encounter mode begins.

4 PP to 6 PP: The PC witnesses the golem fleeing into the aqueducts, but is too far behind to act immediately. The character suffers a -2 circumstance penalty to initiative when encounter mode begins.

3 PP or less: The PC fails to keep sight of the golem and doesn't arrive at the next encounter until one round has passed. If all PCs lose sight of the golem, the party can track it by spending one hour and making a **DC 20 Survival check** or two hours and making a **DC 18 Diplomacy check** to Gather Information. If that fails, the golem circles back in three hours to attack Betar again—killing the wizard in his tower unless the PCs return to stop it.

THE GOLEM'S LAIR

The **flesh golem** has hidden away in a maintenance chamber in the city's aqueducts. Whether encountered in its lair or outside, the golem surrenders once reduced to 60 Hit Points, as it fears going berserk again.

If the PCs give the golem a chance to explain itself, it provides details about its awakening and its desire for revenge against Betar. The golem remains insistent that Betar must pay, but lacks a firm direction on how to do that. Depending on how the PCs approach



the matter, they might convince it to choose another tactic, but it refuses to give up its vendetta unless faced with certain death.

The golem has the statistics of a standard flesh golem (*Pathfinder Second Edition Bestiary*), except that its Intelligence modifier is +0 and its Charisma modifier is -2. It speaks Common.

THE FINAL FATE OF BETAR

If the PCs return to the tower with the golem as an ally, **Betar** hides and attempts to ambush them, assuming they have turned against him. He targets the golem with fire spells in the ensuing combat, preferably catching additional PCs with area effects.

Betar greets the PCs happily if they return with the golem seemingly destroyed, and those who wish to catch the wizard off-guard may be able to trick him this way. After all, the main difference between an active flesh golem and a destroyed one is a matter of movement and cosmetic damage.

BETAR

CREATURE 8

UNIQUE LE MEDIUM HUMAN HUMANOID

Perception +14

Languages Common, Draconic, Elven, Goblin, Infernal, Undercommon

Skills Acrobatics +12, Arcana +16, Crafting +16, Deception +12, Diplomacy +12, Intimidation +12, Society +14, Stealth +14

Str +0, **Dex** +2, **Con** +4, **Int** +4, **Wis** +2, **Cha** +1

Items necklace of fireballs II, bonded +1 striking staff, lesser healing potion (2), 150 gp

AC 23; **Fort** +15, **Ref** +13, **Will** +13

HP 96

Counterspell 2 (*Pathfinder Second Edition Core Rulebook*)

Speed 25 feet

Melee ♦ staff +11 (magical, two-hand d8),

Damage 2d4 bludgeoning

Arcane Prepared Spells DC 24, attack +14;

4th fire shield, mage armor (already cast),

stoneskin; **3rd** fireball, haste, summon elemental;

2nd flaming sphere, invisibility, mirror image;

1st burning hands, feather fall, true strike;

Cantrips (4th) daze, detect magic, produce flame, ray of frost, tanglefoot

Drain Bonded Item ♦ (*Pathfinder Second Edition Core Rulebook*)

Steady Spellcasting (*Pathfinder Second Edition Core Rulebook*)

CONCLUSION AND REWARDS

If the PCs destroy the golem and return it to Betar, they receive the promised reward of **100 gp**. If the PCs reveal that they know the connection between Betar and the golem, the wizard offers them an additional **10 gp** each to keep the information to themselves.

If the PCs allied with the golem, the construct has no reward to offer them beyond its loyalty. PCs who form a relationship with the golem can help it find a sense of self and purpose. This may include giving it a name, instilling it with a sense of morality, and helping it to remember aspects of its life before becoming a construct. Whose brain the golem possesses and what sort of person it becomes could form the basis of many future adventures.

