

Blood From A Stone

A Solo Adventure for Risus: The Anything RPG by S. John Ross
Set in the world of Metropolis by Fritz Lang and Thea von Harbou

Adventure by Hank Harwell

Blood From A Stone is a solo adventure for the Risus role playing game available for free at www.cumberlandgames.com. Solo adventures allow you to play an RPG without the need of a referee or game master.

Set in an alternate future envisioned by Fritz Lang and his (then) wife Thea von Harbou in the 1927 film *Metropolis*, *Blood From A Stone* takes place some time prior to the events portrayed in that film.

For those who have not seen the film, or read the story, it is world dominated by the mega-city Metropolis. It is a city of some 50 million residents who are segregated into three distinct social classes. The Masters are the privileged elite who live in the upper levels of the city. They enjoy all of the comforts and conveniences afforded to them by virtue of their immense wealth. The leader of the Masters, and by default the leader of Metropolis, is Joh Fredersen, who oversees all aspects of the operation of the city.

The Attendants serve the Masters and are responsible for seeing to it that their needs and wants are met. They live in the Lower City below the supports and girders of the Upper City of the Masters. The Lower City also serves as the home of the immense Machines that power Metropolis. The character you will be playing in this adventure is “Shep.” He is a member of the Attendant class, working as a security expert, otherwise known as a “Shepherd.”

In a vast underground city reside the Workers, the third class of denizens of Metropolis. The Workers are composed of those too poor to rise to the level of Attendants, or those who have committed some crime and are sentenced to live in the subterranean Workers City and operate the Machines. Many of them have long since lost the movement of other people and in time have become moving mechanically, mimicking the motions of the machines they are stationed at. In fact, several have forgotten the names they were born with and instead refer to themselves by their identification numbers. The uniform of the Workers consists of coveralls made of navy blue linen, a black soft cap and hard-soled shoes.

About Risus:

Risus is a Role Playing game that uses clichés to define characters. Clichés are broad descriptions of skills, abilities, motivations, philosophies and many other things. Ten dice are divided among a character’s clichés. These dice determine a character’s competency. One die equals a rank amateur. Three to four dice are generally considered to be in the expert range. Six dice are absolute masters.

When faced with a situation that requires a skill roll, the player will choose the appropriate cliché and roll the number of dice allocated to that cliché and attempt to beat a target number.

In combat, the player will roll dice associated with the combat-related cliché and the opponent will roll his combat-related dice. The loser then deducts one die from that cliché. Then the two roll again and the process continues until one side is reduced to zero. That combatant is then declared the loser of the entire conflict.

Lucky Shots, an option from the Risus Companion is included in this adventure. A player may elect to use one of their ten dice to purchase three “Lucky Shots.” If there is a roll that a player absolutely *must* make, an additional die may be rolled at the cost of one “Shot.” That die’s total will be added to the original roll.

One More Thing:

In order to simulate a sense of urgency, at one point you will be directed to begin counting turns. A turn is defined as moving from one paragraph to another and/or a task resolution/combat roll. There is a limit of 30 turns. At the end of 30 turns, you will be directed to a particular paragraph. Follow the instructions at the paragraph to the end.

“Shep”

Clichés:

Attendant Class Security Specialist (4)

Tireless Resourceful Fixer (3)

Cool Methodical Gambler (2)

Lucky Shots ☐ ☐ ☐

i The title “Blood From A Stone” is taken from a song by that name by the group Cycle V, which appears on the soundtrack for Giorgio Moroder’s 1984 restoration of the film *Metropolis*.

“Why me?” you wonder. What did you do to deserve this assignment? You had served Abel Rogge, one of the Masters of Metropolis, well these past two years. You have proved yourself dependable, clever, and discrete in your work as a Shepherd, or security expert. So why are you stuck “shepherding” Althea, Rogge’s daughter and only child?

Certainly you were aware of the communications threatening Althea. But these notes were issued by a group called “The Knights of the Blue Linen.” You did not know much about this group – no one did, really. All anyone knew was that they were supposed to be a collection of disgruntled Workers from the subterranean world of the Machine Rooms, which powered the upper worlds of Metropolis. There had been rumblings for some time – a so-called prophetess had arisen promising a Mediator between the Masters and the

Workers, but there were some who didn't want to wait for a deliverer. But none of the Workers had ever dared to lift their heads above the dark world where they lived.

But Rogge was a nervous man, and now you were hand-picked for this "prime" assignment. So here you are, watching Althea Rogge, socialite daughter of one of the Masters of Metropolis.

She is quite attractive, this young slip of a girl. She possessed a winsome face partially framed by ruddy auburn hair arranged in a modest way that hinted at the flowing mane that would cascade down if one or two hairpins were removed. Her eyes, a soft hazel color, seemed to float above pink, full lips that always seemed poised to laugh at the slightest provocation.

If you were to allow yourself any feelings, you might be distracted by her beauty. But instead, you follow her at a comfortable distance.

Go to 1

1

She heads directly for the Eternal Gardens. Here, in a botanical and arboreal paradise in the ultra-modern urban setting of Metropolis, she casts a glance from side to side, before settling her gaze on a young man you recognize as Nils, another of the privileged children of the Masters. You take up a position near the door, where you can see your charge clearly, but not intrude upon her rendezvous with her favorite suitor. Althea sits near the fountain with Nils, laughing at a shared joke.

After what seemed like an eternity, she stands to leave. As she turns to the door, it strikes you that takes notice of your presence for the first time. Her lips droop slightly, and she strides purposefully through the doorway of the Eternal Gardens.

Roll against your "Attendant Class Security Specialist (4)" cliché, or your "Tireless Resourceful Fixer (3)" cliché. If you roll a 7 or less, go to 2. If you roll 8 or better, go to 3.

2

It appears that your presence has disturbed Miss Althea. She doesn't like being followed any more than you like following her. Despite your careful observations, she has somehow slipped away from your watching eyes.

If you choose to end the adventure now, go to 4. If you are leaving the Eternal Gardens, and you decide to locate your charge, go to 5. If you are leaving Yoshiwara's, go to 9.

3

Not surprisingly, Althea has decided to try to elude her "shepherd." But you are a professional; a privileged young girl is no match for your skill and experience.

Go to 6.

4

You return to Abel Rogge hoping that his daughter has returned home. It doesn't take you long to realize that something has gone terribly wrong. Althea is still missing.

Several weeks later, a small group the Knights of the Blue Linen try to force their way to the Upper City of Metropolis. The Police successfully repel the attempt. In the cleanup of the rebels killed in the conflict, one figure in blue linen stands out. It is a young woman, with ruddy auburn hair and pink full lips.

The End

5

You stop and consider where she might have gone. A popular destination is Yoshiwara's, a nightclub of sorts. You decide to head there.

(From this point forward, begin counting the number of turns, including number of dice rolls for tasks and combat rounds. When you reach 30 turns, go to 26)

Go to 7

5b You're not sure where she could have gone to, but you have two ideas: either she has an assignation with Nils at the Eternal Gardens, or perhaps she might be meeting up with the twins from Yoshiwara's.

(From this point forward, begin counting the number of turns, including number of dice rolls for tasks and combat rounds. When you reach 30 turns, go to 26)

If you decide to go back to the Eternal Gardens, go to 11a. If you decide to try Yoshiwara's, go to 11b.

6

Yoshiwara's is the kind of place that has an unsavory reputation, and deservedly so. But for the spoiled children of the Masters of Metropolis, it is a place of action, pleasure, and freedom.

Sidling up to the bar, you order a mineral water (you are on duty, after all). From your seat you can see Althea as she meets with her friends. She spends a great deal of time with two girls her own age. When they turn so that you can see their faces, you realize that they are twins. The three spend an interminable amount of time dancing to the music of the house band, before fanning herself, Althea takes her leave of her friends. Again, she glances your direction, before slipping out of Yoshiwara's.

Roll against your “Attendant Class Security Specialist (4)” cliché, or your “Tireless Resourceful Fixer (3)” cliché. If you roll a 7 or less, go to 2. If you roll 8 or better, go to 8.

8

Once again, Althea has tried to shake you, but once again, your ability keeps her in view. You follow her as she wanders from Yoshiwara’s. Thankfully, she appears to be going home.

You almost relax when two men appear from a side street. They look determined to confront you directly.

Treat the two attacking you as a Grunt Squad from Risus rules (p. PDF). They fight as “Fanatical Revolutionaries (2).” If you reduce them to zero dice, go to 10a. If they reduce you to zero in either your “Attendant Class Security Specialist (4)” cliché, or your “Tireless Resourceful Fixer (3)” cliché go to 10b

9

You mutter a vicious curse as you realize that this spoiled girl has somehow eluded your care. You realize that you have two choices: You could go back to the Rogge home and hope she turns up, or you could try to find her.

If you decide to return home, go to 4. If you decide to find her, go to 5b.

10a

The fight is short. The inexperience of the thugs is evident. You punch the second thug into unconsciousness. He falls on top of his comrade, the one you dropped first. When you look up, Althea and her captors are nowhere in sight.

At this point, Metropolis Police have arrived to place your assailants under arrest. As the handcuffs are being fastened, you notice under the jacket of one of them a flash of blue linen – the uniform of the workers!

Knowing who the criminals are doesn’t help you right now. You need to know where Althea is...

You could regroup at the Rogge residence, or you could retrace your steps to the two places she was last seen.

(From this point forward, begin counting the number of turns, including number of dice rolls for tasks and combat rounds. When you reach 30 turns, go to 26)

If you decide to return to your employer, go to 4. If you decide to go back to the Eternal Gardens and speak to Nils, go to 11a. If you choose to double back to Yoshiwara’s, go to 11b.

10b

Somehow, one of the thugs gets in a lucky punch, and the next thing you know, you are waking up, shaking off the haze that fogs your brain. Suddenly, you snap to full sobriety: Althea!

You could regroup at the Rogge residence, or you could retrace your steps to the two places she was last seen.

(From this point forward, begin counting the number of turns, including number of dice rolls for tasks and combat rounds. When you reach 30 turns, go to 26)

If you decide to return to your employer, go to 4. If you decide to go back to the Eternal Gardens and speak to Nils, go to 11a. If you choose to double back to Yoshiwara's, go to 11b.

11a

You make the long trek back to the Eternal Gardens in the shadow of Frederson Tower.

There, at the playground for the children on the elite Metropolis, you quickly scan the white-silk clad dilettantes and socialites and the attendants for Nils. Near the fountain you catch sight of the young man. He is chatting with one of the scantily-dressed female attendants.

Purposefully you step up toward the tall youth with the bright blonde hair and the cool blue eyes.

He sees you coming and dismisses the attendant. Without rising from his seat, he addresses you laconically. "Is there something I can do for you?"

"Althea. I am responsible for her safety. I would like to know about her habits, so that I can adequately provide. You appear to be one of her habits. I 'd like to inquire about others."

Nils laughs humorlessly. "Althea had so many habits..." His voice trailed off. "There are two I worry about. She spends too much time with the twins Magda and Marta at Yoshiwara's. Her newest habit is books." He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a small, cracked, leatherbound volume. "She left this here when she took off earlier."

You take the book and open it up. It bears the title, *Early History of Metropolis*, and it was drawn from a small, obscure library in the Lower City.

Nils looks at you gravely. "The next time you see her, remind her that if she wants to stay with me, she needs to give some of these...what did you call them? Habits."

If you want to go to Yoshiwara's, go to 11b, if you choose to locate the library in the lower city, go to 12.

11b

You return to Yoshiwara's, the club that most denizens of the Upper City of Metropolis refer to as the "House of Sin." In the oppressively humid atmosphere of writhing bodies dancing to hard thumping music of the house band, you try to locate the twins, friends of Althea.

You become annoyed by your own lack of patience in your search. Asking a few of the patrons about them, you are directed to a back room, where Yoshiwara's provides a place for the city's privileged to indulge their desire to play the odds.

You visually scan the room, but fail to catch sight of the twins.

Do you sit at the table and try your hand at cards? If so, go to 13. If you decide to return to the House of Rogge, go to 4. If you haven't been to the Eternal Gardens, you can try your luck there – go to 11a.

12

You leave the excesses of the Upper City and travel below the girders and supports to the Lower City. This is your part of Metropolis. You are employed by one of the Masters of Metropolis, but you still belong to the Attendant class. This means you may work in the Upper City, but you live in the Lower City.

Here, the sun rarely shines, as it is nearly obscured by the towering structures of the Upper City, particularly the massive Fredersen Tower; the brain, if not the heart of Metropolis.

The library where Althea got the book is a small building, with few patrons. Quietly, you move to the history section. Following the coding system on the spine of the book, you locate the space where Althea's book was found. Examining the gap in the stacks, you find something that strikes you as out of place. Reaching up, you withdraw a loop of thick, braided leather. Hanging from the loop is a rudely crafted, hand-carved wooden cross.

The only place this cross would have been appropriate would be the Cathedral!

At this point you could visit the Cathedral and attempt to pick up the trail there – go to 16. If you haven't revisited Yoshiwara's yet and want to see if she's there, go to 11b. If you've been to Yoshiwara's and want to follow up on the clue you got from the twins, go to 15. If you want to return to the Rogge Home and await word, go to 4.

13

Roll your “Cool Methodical Gambler” cliché. Add the results together. Continue to roll until your total equals 12 or better. Remember to count each time you roll against your 30 turn limit. If you reach 30 turns, go to 26. If you roll 12 or better, go to 14.

14

As you count your winnings, you see the twins, stagger in to the room, giggling.

“Ladies!” You smile broadly. “May I interest you in some refreshment?” They size you up quickly, but don’t seem to recognize you from earlier. The twins look at you and giggle “Hi! We’re Magda and Marta. So pleased to make your acquaintance!” They then slink up to you and each one takes one of your arms and begin to walk toward the bar.

At the bar, you make small talk, complimenting them on their beauty and charm, but there is something about their demeanor that you can’t quite put your finger on, but you find disturbing.

Gradually you begin asking questions about Althea. Giggling, Marta (or is it Magda?) says “Have you talked with Nils? If Althea wasn’t here with us, she was with him...”

Then Magda (Marta?) giggles “You know, you might find her at the Cinema House. She said something about art films or old films or something like that...”

Suddenly, you realize what it is that has been bothering you about the twins. There is clear evidence of some type of drug use, possibly maohee, that strange euphoric drug that was rumored to have been brought to Metropolis by September, the proprietor of Yoshiwara’s.

“Ladies, it has been certainly enlightening being in your company, but I’m afraid the hour is far later than I thought. I must be off.”

They look at each other with mock disappointment on their faces, then burst into another round of giggling. Then they slink off in search of someone else to pay attention to them. You don’t feel too sorry for them: as long as the maohee is in their systems, wherever they go there is a party.

If you choose to go back to Althea’s home and wait for word, go to 4. If you decide to go the Cinema House, go to 15. If you haven’t visited the Eternal Gardens yet, go to 11a. If you have, go to 12

15

You arrive at the Cinema House. There is a classic film festival on the program for the week. You question many of the visitors, but no one recalls seeing Althea among the cinema aficionados.

The longer you stand there the more convinced you are that the twins’ drug induced haze led you this place. You curse yourself for having wasted so much time here.

If you have reached your 30th turn, go to 26. If you decide to give up the search, go to 4. If you have not revisited the Eternal Gardens go to 11a. If have been there and wish to follow up on the clue you received there, go to 12.

16

The Old Gothic Cathedral stands as a monument to an earlier time, a time of faith. The Upper City has all but forgotten about it, even considering demolishing it to improve the traffic flow. The residents of the Lower City still flock to hear the homilies presented by Desertus, the monk-priest charged with seeing to the care of the congregation of the Cathedral. His closest followers, the quasi-monastic sect known as the Gothics, move about in their coarse robes and hoods, lighting candles, praying at the altars, and being present to assist worshippers.

Inside, you stand in the shadows, observing every face that enters the great church, looking for some sign of Althea.

Roll either your Attendant Class Security Expert (4) or your Tireless Resourceful Fixer (3) cliché. If you roll a 10 or better, go to 17. If you fail, rolling all ones, then go to 18. If you would rather, continue rolling until you score a 10 or better, counting each roll as a separate turn against your limit. If you reach 30 turns, go to 26.

17

Casually you look about you as religious folk stream in to the ancient Cathedral. The stone columns mimic even-more ancient Roman columns. On the side walls are carved stone statues of biblical characters, stories, and themes. On one wall, you see an intriguing representation of the Seven Deadly Sins, flanking Death himself, playing a march on a flute shaped from a human leg bone.

As you stare at the macabre procession in stone, you notice someone keeping to the shadows. You watch the unknown character probe the spaces between the carving of two of the Deadly Sins. Suddenly, one of the Sins begins move forward, then swing out slightly. You quickly glance to both your left and right and realize that no one else has seen the bizarre tableaux. Then before your very eyes, the shadowy figure slides behind the statue, and the stone carved Sin returns to its resting-place.

Quickly, you move to the place where the mysterious person disappeared. Probing the space between the two Sins, your fingers find a hidden catch. Releasing the catch, the statue begins to swing out just as it did moments before. Beyond the opening, you see a series of rough-hewn steps leading down into the Catacombs.

If you decide that its not worth the risk to descend into the Catacombs, go to 4. If you believe that your duty comes before your personal safety and take the first step down the tunnel, go to 19

17b

You enter the large and foreboding Cathedral among other worshipers. Looking about, you see carved in stone a life-size representation of Death playing a funeral march on a flute made from a human thighbone. On either side of Death are figures of the Seven Deadly Sins.

Following the instructions on the sheet tucked in the pages of Althea's book, you step to a place in front of two of the Sins. Reaching your hand into spaces between the two statues, you discover a hidden catch. Releasing the catch, one of the statues begins to swing out and away from the wall revealing a series of rough-hewn steps leading down into the Catacombs.

If you decide that it is not worth the risk to descend into the Catacombs, go to 4. If you believe that your duty comes before your personal safety and take the first step down the tunnel, go to 19

18

A sudden hunch seizes you. You open the book Althea checked out of the library and furiously begin flipping through it. At last you come to a chapter on the Cathedral. Tucked inside, you find a scrap of paper with several notes scrawled on it. These notes indicate that there is a secret door that provides access to ancient catacombs below the Cathedral. The notes indicate that the entrance is somewhere near the monument of Death and the Seven Deadly Sins.

Go to 17b

19

Slowly, carefully you follow the steps down into the catacombs. The statue closes behind you, hiding your entrance from others who might come behind you.

A few steps down there are bare bulb lights strung at regular intervals providing a dim light. You pause for a moment or two until your eyes adjust, then resume your descent. After what seems like an eternity, the path levels off and the bulbs give way to sputtering, smoking torches.

Just ahead, you hear voices talking. As you get closer, your throat tightens with the recognition of one of the voices: Althea! It sounds as if there are three or four individuals and they seem to be planning something...

Go to 20

20

The first voice speaks: "Brothers! We have been patient for too long! Maria speaks of a Mediator who will unite the Hands and Brain of Metropolis and free us from our bondage to the great machines. They play in their carefully-tended gardens while we toil at our stations – 10 hours on, 10 hours off! They dance, while we march. I say no more!

Althea's voice chimes in. "But no one is to be hurt, correct? This struggle is only to attract attention to the plight of the Workers below. I will only follow with the assurance that our mission will not bear violence!"

Another voice: "Certainly mistress." There was something almost too smooth in the reply. "Your assistance is most valuable to us in our efforts. We have brought you here because your family connections will make the Masters notice us."

"Then what are the weapons for?" Althea sounded suspicious.

The first voice spoke again. "Mistress, do not be concerned. These weapons are not for use, but for show. The Masters will be more likely to accept the seriousness of our cause if we are carrying these weapons."

Althea says nothing, and you interpret her silence as acceptance. You do not believe for a moment that this will be a peaceful demonstration, even though in her naivete, your charge is deceived.

Your mind races. Should you rush in an attempt a rescue of Althea alone, or do you risk taking the time to recruit reinforcements?

If you decide to get reinforcements, go to 22. If you decide to go in single-handedly, go to 21

21

For a moment you consider rushing back to the Metropolis Police to crush this group of rebels, but wonder if there is time. Pulling your revolver, you decide that with the element of surprise, you could stage a rescue on your own.

Stepping from the shadows, you confront the so-called "Knights of the Blue Linen." You were right, there are three of them, not counting Althea. While she stands aside in horror, you make your move.

Treat the Knights as "Fanatical Revolutionaries (4)." If you reduce the squad to zero dice, go to 23. If the squad reduces you to zero in any one cliché, go to 24. Remember to count each roll of the dice as a separate turn for the 30-turn limit. If in either case, you reach 30, go to 25.

22

You slip back up the steps. Finding the release on the other side, you open the secret door and speed to police substation. When you have a small force, you re-enter the passageway only to discover that the group has left – with Althea!

At a dead end, you have no choice but to return to Althea's home.

Go to 4

23

Your bold move has paid off. The Knights are caught completely off guard. You club one of them with the butt of your pistol, knocking him out. Kicking another in the kneecap, you grab Althea's arm and run back toward the hidden entrance to the Cathedral. As you run, you hear the growls of the remaining rebel, and then a sharp *pop* and the rock near Althea's head disintegrates. Her face blanches, and her struggles against your iron grip cease. She is still muttering "What a fool I was..." as you escape into the Cathedral and return home, safe and sound.

The End.

24

The Knights of the Blue Linen rush you. You quickly fire a shot from your revolver, but the shot goes wide, and that is the only shot you manage to get off. They fall upon you with fists flailing, and you feel your grip on the gun releasing. The pistol is snatched out of your hand. You hear a shot, feel a blazing pain begin in your abdomen, then spread outward through the rest of your body, then numbness, then nothing. Your humiliation knows no bounds – you have been killed, and with your own gun!

The End.

25

While you are fighting with two of the Knights, the third ushers Althea further down into the Catacombs. You dispose of your two, but as you attempt to follow, the trail branches in several directions. You stop, looking down the bewildering array of tunnels. You could try one of them, but you know that there have been those who have gone into these catacombs and have never returned.

You return to the surface and contact the Police, who send teams into the Catacombs, but they find no trace of the Knights of the Blue Linen, nor of your charge. You have no choice but to return to your employers home and hope for the best.

Go to 4.

26

At every turn you are frustrated in your attempts to discover your charge's whereabouts. You have searched in every possible place you can think of in Metropolis but to no avail. Discouraged you return back to the Rogge Home to report your findings, or lack thereof.

Go to 4.

❖ References

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