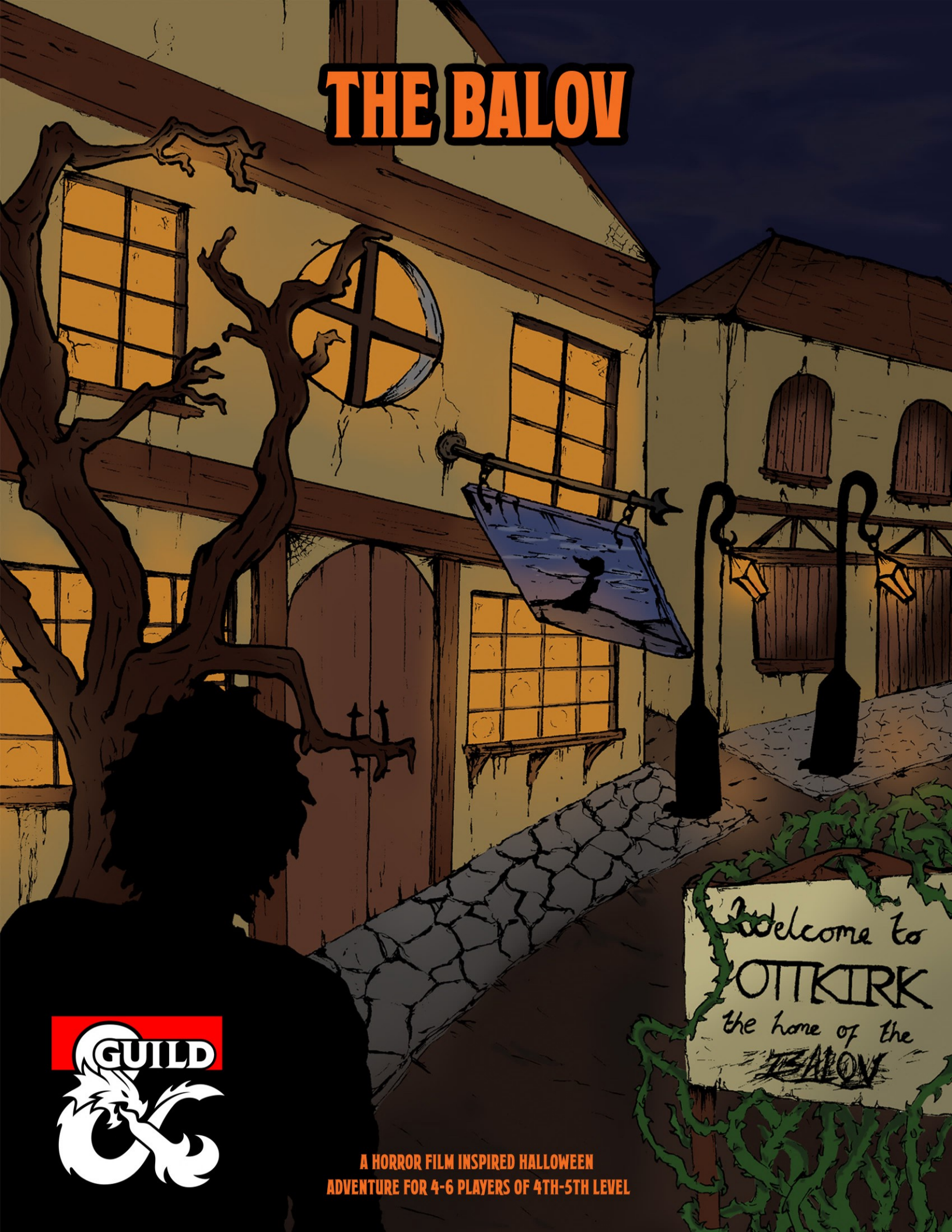


THE BALOV



A HORROR FILM INSPIRED HALLOWEEN
ADVENTURE FOR 4-6 PLAYERS OF 4TH-5TH LEVEL

INTRODUCTION

From birth Charlie Wester was chosen. His life was forfeit to Dauda, an ancient being thought lost in the annals of time. As a child bad luck haunted Charlie, he was shunned by all in Ottkirk but once death began to follow him, the townspeople would have no more of Charlie Wester. As he hung in the town square it was already too late, little Charlie Wester had become what the town had always feared, The Balov. A year passed before the killing started, rumours of a child in a crude Hallow's Eve mask lurking in the fog spread. Just as quickly as they came, the killings stopped. It has been twenty five years since The Balov first stalked the streets of Ottkirk but this night, this is the night he comes home.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The Balov is a five-seven hour horror adventure for fifth edition Dungeons and Dragons for a party of four to six adventurers of fourth to fifth level. This document is meant for the dungeon master only and assumes you have access to the Player's Handbook, Dungeon Master's Guide and Monster Manual. It is recommended that you read through this adventure in its entirety before you run it. This adventure is best played over two shorter sessions or one full day session with appropriate breaks.

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

The small town of Ottkirk seems unremarkable to the average traveler's eye but it holds a dark secret that is about to come back and tear it asunder. A dark, often unmentioned, secret of Ottkirk tells of a young boy the town believed to be cursed and his premature death at the hands of those that feared him. Ottkirk is a solemn place of simple townsfolk that want nothing more than to forget their past.

ADVENTURE STRUCTURE

This adventure is presented as the tale of Charlie Wester's return to Ottkirk as The Balov, a dread inducing killer. It is possible that some elements of the story can happen in a different order to those presented here, dependent on your players actions. In this case, the events that happen at any of the important locations within Ottkirk happen when the party first arrive there despite the current time of day. There are additional locations in Appendix C for the party to visit if they wish to explore Ottkirk further.

MOOD AND ATMOSPHERE

Inspired by the slasher films of the late 1970s, Black Christmas, Halloween and The Town That Dreaded Sundown, to name a few, building suspense and a tense atmosphere is key to this adventure. This can be done in a number of ways, including playing the adventure by candlelight and choosing brooding organ music as your soundtrack to create this atmosphere from the beginning of the session.



Designed by Asa Wheatley

CHAPTER 1: OTTKIRK, THE HOME OF THE BALOV

Ottkirk is a simple town of just over two hundred people. It's the kind of town where everyone knows everyone but many keep their secrets to themselves. The town has its necessities including a general store, a run down temple, a blacksmith and other such establishments befitting a town of its size. While it does not receive many visitors and the population of Ottkirk is for the majority human, they tend not to look down upon those different from themselves for the last time that happened The Balov was created. While many do not believe that Charlie Wester is still alive, and think of his tale as nothing more than a mixture of a dark part of their history and a story told to scare children, Ottkirkians are a superstitious people.

ARRIVAL AT OTTKIRK

Arriving at Ottkirk is best done after sunset to help establish a mysterious and dark atmosphere. When the party arrive at Ottkirk read the below:

As you take your first steps into Ottkirk it is the silence that bothers you first. The streets are empty, lit only by faint oil lanterns hanging from cobweb-ridden posts throughout. The lanterns begin to swing softly in the wind, the squeaking of their handles mimicking the pace of a heavy eternal heartbeat. Before you step in further you notice a wooden sign marking the entrance of Ottkirk. Once beautifully crafted, it has been worn down by the elements and vandalism. The sign now reads 'Welcome to Ottkirk, the home of The BALOV'. The word Balov has been carved into the wood over the sign, hiding its previous iteration. As you follow the stone path into the town you spot a single building with light emanating from its interior. A large hanging sign marks the building, it depicts a young woman as she sits atop a moor alone, distressed. Below the painting reads 'The Lonely Maiden, Tavern & Inn'. Longing for an ale and some respite you head inside.

THE LONELY MAIDEN, TAVERN AND INN

The Lonely Maiden is dimly lit by a collection of small oil lanterns and clusters of candles. As you enter you see a single patron and barkeep within. The patron is an older human male, a circle of dirty grey hair sits atop his head like a decrepit crown, his simple black clothes have numerous tears and stains that even the dark material can not hide. He sits at the bar with his head resting on his folded arms, intermittent snores filling the silence. The barkeep, a younger, muscular human woman leans on the bar from behind it, reading a well-used book. She looks up confused, not expecting any more patrons for the evening. 'Good evening folks.'

Boliver is the town drunk. He has a pungent smell if he gets too close and this is why Gertrude tends to stick to the other side of the bar unless she is serving him a drink. Boliver is shunned by most of the town but he always has a seat at The Lonely Maiden, a drunk's money is as good as anyone else's, Gert always says. Boliver loves to tell the wretched story of The Balov and after some time he'll wake and seeing new travellers, will relish in telling them the tale.

Gertrude Sterkert, Gert to most, inherited The Lonely Maiden from her father who died almost a year ago. She never intended for her life to be running the Maiden but that is what it has become. Gertrude came from a family of former soldiers and warriors, her father rebelled against this to live a fairly normal life running the tavern. Gert's great grandfather, Hector Sterkert, was a legend across the continent, and following in his footsteps she prioritizes her fitness and strength above all else. Gertrude is surprised to see the party in

Ottkirk but does not press too hard for answers as to why they are visiting. She like much of the town dismiss Boliver and his tales.

After the party have spent a little time in the Tavern, read the following:

The noise of other people stirs Boliver, the town drunk. He looks up attempting to remember where he is. It is only after he takes a subconscious sip of ale that he realises. As he puts his tankard back down on the counter he notices the party. 'Ah! New friends.' Boliver steps off his stool, having to catch himself, his legs wobbling as he hits solid ground. He takes a couple of slow initial steps forward before he more confidently approaches your table. 'New to Ottkirk I see. Well I have a tale for you.' Boliver sits with you and smiles, his black teeth, the few he has left anyway, reveal a stench worse than you thought possible. 'Another round on our new friends Gert, the tale of little Charlie Wester awaits us.'

Boliver then begins to rattle off the legend of The Balov. Have Boliver tell the story in a manner best fitting to your party and session. Below the tale is presented as a town myth with all the 'facts' as Boliver knows them. There is a more accurate version of the myth that Sam Wester knows and will explain to the party further into the adventure.

THE LEGEND OF LITTLE CHARLIE WESTER

Little Charlie Wester had it tough from birth. A mere two days after he was born his father was impaled on a pitchfork in a freak accident. He grew up quiet and alone, only occasionally speaking a few words to his sister Samantha, who was a year his senior. Bad luck seemed to follow Charlie as he grew. The day after he found his way into Giles Truftclump's corn field, the crops began to die. When Charlie decided to play in the fountain in the square they say the water bubbled and boiled the other children. As kids are want to do, the children of Ottkirk never let him forget it. They would gather outside the Wester family home and call out to Charlie. 'Balov! Balov!' they would shout. An old slur for one cursed. Before too long all of Ottkirk called Charlie The Balov, although for most it wasn't as openly as those hateful children. The years went by and the Westers kept to themselves. It wasn't until the death of poor Annie Kurtson – such a sweet little girl. You see, she was one of the few that held nothing against Charlie but one afternoon when she had found her way independently to Charlie a tragic accident befell her. The town's animosity could no longer be kept at bay. They marched to the Wester's home and demanded the boy be handed to them for public execution. To them he was a curse on the town and they wanted rid of him. When his mother and sister were threatened with death they gave Charlie up to the enraged crowd. Within hours the boy was hanged in the square and the town, too late, realised their brutality. The body was left to swing in the wind as the citizens of Ottkirk dispersed but when his mother and sister came to retrieve the body it was gone, the noose however was still there, it's knot tight. That day marked the death of Charlie Wester and the birth of The Balov. Over the next year there were rumours of a child in a crudely made mask ominously spotted throughout the town. It wasn't until the first death that the town began to worry. Throughout the year there were four deaths, with the final two being that of Charlie's mother and sister as their house burned to cinders. It has been twenty five years since he was hanged in the square. There are rumours that little Charlie Wester walks the land, lost, one day to return to Ottkirk and take his vengeance.

Give the players a few moments to process and converse if they need to. Then read the following for the attention of the player/s with passive perception of 14 or higher;

Caught up in the story of The Balov it takes you a moment to realise that the faint whistling you hear is not the wind, no, it is the screams of someone in peril. And the screams are getting louder, closer and then they are gone. Silence reigns once more.

Give the players another moment here to relax and then, imitating a body part hitting the door of The Lonely Maiden, make a loud noise to get them to jump.

The loud noise startles you as you turn to its source, the door of the Lonely Maiden tavern shakes softly as it recovers. Boliver's eyes widen and his hands begin to shake as he whispers quietly to himself, 'The Balov is home. The Balov is home'.

When the party make their way outside, read the following:

As you step out into the quiet night air your eye catches something on the ground just ahead, it takes you a moment to focus. A severed human arm lies at your feet. Your eyes follow the blood trail deeper into the town but before you can find the source you notice something hurtling towards you.

The Balov stands in the distance and throws the rest of the body of his latest victim at the party. Have the player at the front of the group roll a Dexterity saving throw, DC15, to avoid the incoming body. If they are hit, it does no damage but they are covered in the blood and viscera of the victim and are knocked prone. Once this saving throw is resolved, read the following:

Unmoving in the darkness ahead of you stands a shadowy figure, at least 9ft tall with shoulders wide enough to block a doorway. The fog seems to coalesce around it. You see no real detail in its face but you can feel its eyes, glaring at you. Taunting you.

The Balov is a creature of great stature and presence. He wears simple and ragged cloth clothing. The cloth is dark and worn. In one hand he holds a black iron morningstar that drips with the blood of his previous victims. The most haunting element of his attire is the crude mask he wears. This is the mask Dauda gifted him and what imbues him with much of his power. The mask is one similar to those that accompanied handmade costumes in the 1950s. The Balov's stats can be found in Appendix. C.

The Balov's initial tactics are that of intimidation and fear inducing. He wants the party to fear him before they even get close. While not the most intelligent creature the influence from Dauda has given him the ability to manipulate those he wishes to scare. He is smart enough to understand if he is in a deadly situation and his tactics, influenced by his patron, are to strike fear into the party rather than kill them all initially.

After the encounter, if they return to The Lonely Maiden, Gert will be comforting Boliver who is now in shock sitting on the floor constantly repeating 'The Balov is home, the Balov is home.' Gert will suggest to the party that they should go and tell the Sheriff about what has happened. However if your party refuse to stay outside with The Balov about then you can have the Sheriff come to them during the early hours of the morning after someone else, maybe Gert has reported the murder to Sheriff Sofia.

OTTKIRK LAW

Ottkirk Law is not much more than a simple hut where the Sheriff and her guards meet and plan their routes for the day.

As the party approach read the following:

You reach what looks to be a small hut, the soft light from inside illuminates the sign that hangs above the door, it reads 'Ottkirk Law'. The door stands ajar and you can hear muffled voices on the other side. As you step inside you see that the interior of Ottkirk Law is as simple as its exterior. The oil lanterns hanging from either side of the room light the two desks that face each other in the centre of the room. On the back wall hangs a map of Ottkirk.

Sheriff Sofia Dash is a middle aged half-elf woman. She has been Sheriff for the last three years. She takes pride in her job, having lived in Ottkirk all her life. This evening is the most intense she has had since starting her current position. She has been informed of the murder of two teenagers up at Pecking Point, where the town's teenagers go for a bit of privacy, away from their parents.

When the party arrive she is standing behind her desk, frantically flipping through papers. She is initially a bit short with them, trying to deal with the information of the teenagers deaths but appreciates any help the party will offer and the information they have about the secondary attack. She doesn't believe any of The Balov superstitions, not because she thinks it's impossible but because she is afraid they are true. She knows how to deal with human criminals not supernatural beings bent on revenge. Ultimately she would like the party to return to The Lonely Maiden and she will call on them if they are needed. She will go and investigate the scene at Pecking Point and ask one of her duty guards to go with the party and look at the scene outside the tavern. She will get another guard to wake the rest and bring everyone on duty.

Should the party ask for a reward Sofia will attempt to pull something together, you may offer what you feel would be fitting of their accomplishments and what the small town of Otkirk could afford. A good starting point would be 200 gold pieces.

A note on suspicions:

Sheriff Sofia being suspicious of the party because they are new in town has been intentionally left out of this adventure as this can become repetitive among adventures and would be a trivial part of this story.

CHAPTER 2: OTTKIRK, BY DAY

OTTKIRK TOWN SQUARE

The next day Sheriff Sofia will send one of her guards to bring the party to the town square to attend the town meeting if they are not already in attendance.

As they arrive they can see about half of the town in attendance, the guards throughout the town are more present but there is still only one to every 20-30 citizens of Otkirk.

The first thing you notice about this gathering of the citizens of Otkirk is the presence of the guards. When you entered Otkirk the night before they were nowhere to be seen but now they line the streets, however you get the feeling that this small smattering of guards now present in the town square is all Otkirk has to offer. A large group of Otkirkians stand restlessly in front of the large ornate fountain that marks the town square. A few minutes go by and Sheriff Sofia approaches the fountain, standing on the steps of it to give herself a bit of height over the crowd. The crowd begins to quiet and they all await the Sheriff's words. 'Last night was one of the most horrific in Otkirk's recent years, the brutal deaths of three of our citizens is devastating for us all. For the safety of each of you, as of this moment, there is a town-wide curfew in effect and there is to be no one on the streets after sunset. The guard will be patrolling throughout the town. Please make sure that you stick in large groups tonight inside your homes. There will be no further discussion of this or any mention of The Balov or Charlie Wester until the culprit is caught. Thank you.' The crowd is silent for a moment and then erupts in a frenzy as Sheriff Sofia steps away and heads back to Otkirk Law.

On the outskirts of the crowd stands a rather suspicious woman, this is the first appearance of Samantha Wester. Have the player with the highest passive perception spot her and then read the following:

Scanning the crowd you see a young human woman on the edge of the square looking in. She leans against a building behind the guard line. An intense look crosses her face, half blocked by a shock of scarlet hair, as the Sheriff talks. A stone necklace hangs from her neck, some kind of symbol is carved into the stone but you can not recognise it from this distance. The woman turns and looks directly at you, her eyes pierce into you and you are frozen for a moment. You break from it and step forward only to have a citizen block your path as you push your way past. Then, the mysterious woman, is nowhere to be seen.

THE WESTER FAMILY HOME

The Wester Family home is easy enough to find. It sits in a street towards the north west of the town that is no longer inhabited. The fear of the 'curse' keeps the citizens away. If the party ask any citizen they will be able to tell them where the Wester home is, however these citizens will point them in the right direction but will never accompany them there.

When the party arrive at the house, read the following:

Despite the sun that lights this street the emptiness reminds you of the quiet you were first met with as you entered the town of Otkirk. As you make your way further into the street you can instantly see the Wester Home. A decrepit shell of the family abode that is once was. Its walls black from a raging fire years before. The wind whistles through the house filling your nostrils with the deep smell of old burnt wood.

Inside the Wester Family Home the following four rooms remain:

1. THE LIVING QUARTERS

In this central room not much remains, blackened walls line the inside of the Wester Family Home. A set of broken and burnt stairs lead up to a large empty second level. It's only then that you realise the flooring beneath your feet used to be on that of the upper level. There are the charred remains of doors on both the east and west walls of this former central room. Intermittent sounds and a soft blue light come from the room to the West.

2. THE CHILDREN'S ROOM

To the East of the Living Quarters the former room of Charlie and Samantha Wester sits empty. Overturned bookcases and burnt beds are all that remains of this room.

If the party take some time to investigate or roll an Investigation check (DC12) they will discover the following things;

- A secret hidden trap door, magically sealed with a strange glowing symbol engraved onto it. The trap door itself isn't visible to the naked eye. If a PC casts detected magic they can see a thin white line in a 5ft rectangular shape around the symbol. The magic protects the entrance to The Balov's lair from any damage or discovery unless the stone necklace is pressed against the symbol in the floor. This magic can not be dispelled by a Dispel Magic spell or destroyed by magical or non-magical weapons. This symbol matches that of Samantha Wester's stone necklace. The symbol here is the marking of Dauda (more information about Dauda can be found in Appendix. B and The Balov's Lair section) The only way it can be opened is to touch the stone necklace to the glowing symbol. The glow is similar to that of the spell, Dauda's Black Flame (see Appendix. B).

- A journal that belonged to Sam Wester. This contains basic information about the Wester family, but it also chronicles the descent of Charlie Wester. Charlie was quiet initially but became more so as the years went on. He created himself a Hallow's Night mask and necklaces (gifting one to Samantha). This was the last time he spoke. When he was killed he was wearing his mask.

- DC13 History check for the players to know that Hallow's Night is an ancient yearly tradition that is not practiced much anymore, where parents would send their children door-to-door around the village begging. The children wore masks to hide the shame of their families.

- Some of Charlie's drawings with the whole family, including the dark shadow that follows him, this is Dauda.

3. THE KITCHEN

From within this room a blue light emanates. As you step closer you can see the blue floating image of a woman, dressed in simple clothes, moving from one counter to the other. It seems at first she is too preoccupied to notice you until she stops suddenly. Her head slowly...

...turns and she lets out a horrific screech as she rushes towards you. The spirit's form washes over you as the blue light fades and before you can react she is gone, dispersed into the air around you. An echo of a once loving mother.

This is the spirit of Martha Wester, Sam & Charlie's mother.

4. WASH ROOM

Off the Kitchen this small room would have been where the family will have washed themselves and their belongings. Of all the rooms it is the one that remains mostly intact while still covered by the black ash that fills this home.

CHAPTER 3: INTO THE BALOV'S LAIR

CONFRONTING SAM WESTER

There are multiple ways the party can encounter Sam Wester, to discover her connection to The Balov and to retrieve the stone necklace she possesses. A few of them are listed below for you.

OUTSIDE THE WESTER HOUSE

It's possible that Sam followed the party after the meeting in the Town Square. She does not want to go inside her old home initially but will keep watch while they are inside. When they go to leave she will try to escape but it's possible the party can catch up to her/follow her to her home.

WITHIN HER OWN HOME

Unaware of what the party is up to, she is with her adopted uncle and aunt in their home. If the party ask around and describe her most of the people within the town will know her and can point them in the right direction. Here her aunt and uncle will be instantly defensive but Sam will give in after a little while because, if it is Charlie, she wants to do what she can to help the party stop him and put him to rest.

AT THE LONELY MAIDEN

She has heard that the party are attempting to try and stop the killer and that they've been staying at The Lonely Maiden so has headed there to wait for them. When there she will tell them everything she knows and asks that if there is anything she can do to help then she will. All she wants is to see Charlie finally at rest.

SAMANTHA WESTER'S TALE OF THE BALOV

Sam's version of The Balov myth is mostly the same as Boliver's with a few minor differences.

- She did not die in the fire, instead Charlie returned to their home and killed their mother but Sam managed to escape. Charlie set fire to the house in the commotion and Sam believed that he had died there as the killings then stopped. She later used it to fake her death after being taken in by a local family that were friendly towards the Westers. Kept hidden from the town initially, Sam became Penelope, the niece of Jacob and Elizabeth Loomis.

- She believes there is a bit of Charlie still left in The Balov. She remembers the night of the fire when she called out to him and he hesitated for a moment – enough for her to escape. (This is the most important piece of information, as if the party attempt to appeal to Charlie they may be able to stun him for a round)

- The stone necklace she wears shares the same symbol as the trap door. She never understood what it was but when Charlie gave her the necklace it was the last time that he properly spoke to her. (This necklace is the only way for the party to open the entrance to The Balov's Lair)

- Charlie used to disappear for hours on end closer to his death, they never knew where he went.

- Charlie had a Hallow's Night mask that towards the end of his life he would always wear. It was a crudely made mask that Samantha and her mother, Martha, believed that he had made himself but after the initial killings and reported sightings she is now unsure, it gives her an uneasy feeling.

Samantha will ask to join the party should they return to The Wester Family Home to investigate the trapdoor that leads to the Lair of The Balov.

THE LAIR OF THE BALOV

The trapdoor will only open into The Lair of The Balov if the stone engraved necklace is placed atop it. When the party do so, read the following:

As you touch the stone symbol to the ash coated floor the wooden board begin to fade away revealing an overused rickety rope ladder that leads down into the darkness.

When the party enter the trapdoor, read the following:

When you reach the bottom something cracks beneath your step, you look down to see the remnants of bones scattered across the ground ahead of you. This tunnel appears to have been carved out of the earth below the Wester Family Home with bare hands, the walls rough to the touch. It takes you a moment to notice but there is something wrong with the light here. The torches all hold black flames and they light the tunnel with shadows. At the cusp of the flame's light you can see an opening into some kind of crudely formed room.

The Balov has cast Dauda's Black Flame on the four torches that line this tunnel. They were cast two days prior. More details on this new spell can be found in Appendix. B.

When they enter the room at the end of the tunnel read the follow:

This crudely formed room holds the few essentials a person would need to live, scraps of food, dead animals torn to shreds rest in one corner next to a blanket, frayed at all sides. The light in here gives off a more orange glow but is somehow dimmer than that of the tunnel before it. More disturbingly in the centre of the back wall sits an altar of skulls and bones, torn black cloth caught in the bones flutters in the soft winds that whip through the room. Above the altar on the wall, drawn in blood, sits the same symbol that features on the stone necklace and trapdoor.

A Religion check (DC18) must be made to identify that this is a shrine to the Demi-God Dauda, a fairly unknown entity that relishes in the manipulation of the live of others. She is said to choose or curse specific individuals and follow them all their lives. There are no recently reported sightings of Dauda or her followers but her work has been prevalent throughout the darker parts of the world.

After the party has investigated the Lair for a little while read the following:

You hear the sound of water dousing flames, as if a torch was dropped into a well. When you look towards the tunnel you see the flames ahead of you begin to go out, each one sequentially dissipating into the darkness until the tunnel is pitch black.

The Balov will return here, it is up to you if he does so because of the disturbance of the party. The Balov knows the shadows are his allies and will attempt to use them in his favour to surprise the party before he kills them.

Sam will spend most of her time out of the fight, if the party has brought her along. She will use her turns to attempt to appeal to Charlie. Screaming out his name and trying to break through to him. The Balov must make a DC12 Wisdom saving throw against her calls or be stunned for 1 round. If the party attempt this tactic without her The Balov will have advantage on the saving throw. Once The Balov has been stunned once in this way he is immune to the effect for 24 hours.

The stats for The Balov and all the magical items belonging to The Balov are located in Appendix. C and Appendix. A respectively.

EPILOGUE

Once The Balov has been defeated, both times (including its Playing Dead ability). The Mask of The Balov will seek its new host, Samantha Wester. Sam will be drawn to the mask, even after she witnesses someone else touch it and be injured, she will be mesmerised by it but unless the party drop their guard or give Samantha the mask she will not do anything to take it just yet.

This is the perfect opportunity to wrap up the adventure preventing the party from feeling like they must wrap everything up themselves unless you are including this as part of a longer running campaign. Below there are a number of endings should any of these fit your session however if they do not, feel free to end this installment of the story of Dauda and the Balov in a way best suiting your party and adventure.

If Samantha gets her hands on the mask while still in the Lair of the Balov read the following:

As Samantha's hands grip the mask tears stream down her face, 'I'm sorry, I can't control it'. Raising the mask to her face, the shape of a dark shadow stands over her, a thin seemingly humanoid figure with long gangly arms. Protruding from the fingers, thin fleshy strings pull the mask closer to Samantha. It seems Dauda has moved on to a new quarry. The darkness fills the room around you, you frantically rush to where Samantha was but as the light fades back into the room she is gone. You search the town for hours before you conclude that she is not here anymore. The Sheriff thanks you for your aid but confides in you that maybe this is best left to the people of Ottkirk to finish. After a complimentary night's stay at The Lonely Maiden you make your way out of Ottkirk victorious yet sombre and as the wind and shadows whip around you they whisper, 'The Balov Lives Again'.

If Samantha Wester does not immediately get possession of the mask, use the ending presented below.

As a quick summary to finish off the adventure for your party, read the following:

With that The Balov and Dauda are defeated, at least for the moment. You rally yourselves and exit the old abandoned home. The town is safe and Sheriff Sophia is ever grateful for your bravery but her compliments leave a bitter taste in your mouth, a Demi-God such as Dauda must have more planned than one brutish killer. After a complimentary night's stay at The Lonely Maiden you make your way out of Ottkirk victorious yet sombre.

As a post-credits scene to the adventure there are the following extracts to be read once the party have left Ottkirk there are two available to them dependant on the actions of the party with regards to The Mask of The Balov. These extracts each act as a set up to the sequel adventure, The Balov Lives Again.

If they party leave the Mask of The Balov within the care of Sheriff Sophia, read the following:

Sheriff Sophia sits alone in Ottkirk Law. The Mask of The Balov encased in a steel chest sits at her feet. A shiver comes over her as she jolts back, the screech of her chair against the floor is spine-chilling. Fear and pain run across her face as a dark figure, followed by animated shadows, steps into the building. Sophia looks up, unable to move

'Please. Help me.' The figure looks on distressed unable to help but moving ever closer. Tears stream down Samantha Wester's face as she opens the steel box, 'I'm sorry, I can't control it'. Raising the mask to her face, the shape of a dark shadow stands over her, a thin seemingly humanoid figure with long gangly arms. It seems Dauda has moved on to a new quarry. Then a voice whispers, 'The Balov Lives Again'.

If they party keep the Mask of The Balov, read the following, addressed to the player that holds the mask:

It has been a few days since you left the town of Ottkirk but there is something about The Mask of The Balov that intrigues you. A mystery deep within, you hold it in front of you, unsure of how it came to be there, in your hands, it's a moment before you realise the pain that pulses through your veins. The mask falls from your grip and as you attempt to lean forward to retrieve it you find that you do not move. Try as you might your muscles are frozen in place and you hear the soft steps of someone silently approaching. Tears stream down Samantha Wester's face as she steps towards the mask on the ground, 'I'm sorry, I can't control it'. Raising the mask to her face, the shape of a dark shadow stands over her, a thin seemingly humanoid figure with long gangly arms. It seems Dauda has moved on to a new quarry. Then a voice whispers, 'The Balov Lives Again'.

APPENDIX A: MAGIC ITEMS

MASK OF THE BALOV

Wondrous Item, rare (requires attunement)

This roughly carved mask resembles that of an ancient mask of Hallow, worn by children who went begging on The Hallow Night.

The masks were worn to hide the shame of the families that had to send their children begging.

This mask instills the wearer with the powers of The Balov, Dauda's greatest servant. If it is touched by someone without Wester Family blood the mask emanates a blast of blistering cold and the holder must make a DC16 Constitution saving throw. On a failure they take 4d6 cold damage and drop the mask, only dropping the mask on a successful save.

If the holder does not have Wester Family blood but they have the Symbol of Dauda on them in some form they can make a DC17 Charisma Check to attempt to gain the favour of the mask. If they succeed in this way and they wear the mask then they gain the following benefits:

While wielding the Morningstar of Dauda you have full control of it.

While wearing The Mask of the Balov you have advantage on all Intimidation checks.

Soul drain. Whenever you reduce a creature to 0HP you gain additional temporary hit points equal to the amount of Hit Dice the target had (e.g. a creature with 4d8 would grant the wearer an additional 4 temporary hp).

If the wearer attempts to remove the mask they must make a DC15 Charisma saving throw and on a failure they hear the whispers of Dauda in their ear and they do not remove the mask.

MORTIS, MORNINGSTAR OF DAUDA

Weapon (Morningstar), legendary

This gnarled black iron morningstar is Mortis, the chosen weapon of The Balov, Dauda's servant.

This weapon is a +2 Morningstar but its other features can only be accessed by a servant of Dauda. If the wielder is wearing The Mask of the Balov, The Symbol of Dauda or is a Warlock with Dauda as their patron they gain access to all of Mortis' abilities.

Mortis has 5 charges which can be used in the following ways:

The Reaper's Spikes (2 charges). The dark spikes on the exterior of the Morningstar can lodge themselves into the body of a target it hits. The target must make a DC14 Constitution saving throw taking an additional 2d6 damage on a failure, on The Balov's next turn as the spikes explode within them, or half as much on a success.

Clouding strike (1 charge). When you hit a creature with mortis you can cast fog cloud at 1st level as the morningstar crashes into its target. The spell is cast centered on the target.

Any spent charges are regained after a short or long rest.

SYMBOL OF DAUDA

Wondrous item, legendary (requires attunement)

This archaic symbol of the demi-god Dauda shows the wearer's dedication to this melovant being. While wearing this symbol you can cast Misty Step twice per long rest. If you are wearing this, you can also use, to their fullest abilities, The Mask of The Balov and Mortis, The Morningstar of Dauda.

APPENDIX B: CHARACTER OTPTIONS

OTHERWORLDLY PATRONS

DAUDA, THE BANEFUL PUPPETEER

Dauda was once human, or so the legends say. They speak of a narcissistic necromancer who wanted nothing more than to meddle in the lives of others. She spent years conniving and manipulating her way to the top of The Baneful Puppeteers, a secret organisation dedicated to controlling the lives of the living and the dead. Leading up to her death Dauda tricked the remaining members of The Baneful Puppeteers into sacrificing their lives so that she could live on as a dark patron of the order. At the time new worshippers flocked to her, eager to become the new Baneful Puppeteers but now Dauda is all but forgotten, her name only on the lips of her few remaining worshippers. She sets out to curse and manipulate lives for her own amusement. Dauda still holds the symbol of The Baneful Puppeteers as her own, a gangly black hand hovering with thin pendulous strings emanating from each of the fingertips.

EXPANDED SPELL LIST

Dauda, The Baneful Puppeteer lets you choose from an expanded list of spells when you learn a warlock spell. The following spells are added to the warlock spell list for you.

DAUDA EXPANDED SPELLS

Spell Level Spells

1st	false life, shield of faith
2nd	blindness/deafness, dauda's malevolent drudge
3rd	dauda's black flame, revivify
4th	death ward, fabricate
5th	dauda's haunting visage, modify memory

PLAYING DEAD

Starting at 1st level, the first time you are reduced to 0 hp you immediately stabilize. Unless you are awoken beforehand, you wake up with the need to kill the closest enemy creature to you in the next 1d4+1 rounds. If they are within 5ft of you, you can make a melee attack against them as a reaction. You wake with hit points equal to the rounds you were playing dead. Once this ability has been used it can not be used again until you have finished a short or long rest.

RACONTEUR OF FATE

Starting at 6th level, as an action can choose to embrace the teachings of The Baneful Puppeteers and become a Raconteur of Fate as you are imbued with the manipulative power of Dauda for a number of hours equal to your Charisma modifier. You have advantage on all Charisma checks made to influence, control or manipulate another creature for the duration.

STRINGS OF THE PUPPETEER

Beginning at 10th level, as a reaction when an attack hits you you can manipulate the strings of fate around you and force the attack to hit another creature of your choice within range. If the original attack roll is below the new target's AC the attack does not hit but is still completed. You must complete a short or long rest before you can use this ability again.

EQUIVALENT EXCHANGE

Upon reaching 14th level, as an action you can attempt to exchange the abilities of two creatures you can see within 30ft for a duration of 10 minutes or until the exchange is broken. The creatures must be willing for this exchange to take place. Each unwilling creature must make a Constitution saving throw against your Warlock Spell Save DC. On a failure the two creatures swap one of the following statistics for the duration, chosen by you; Armour Class, One Ability Score, Movement Speed or Languages. A creature that is an unwilling part of this exchange can repeat the saving throw at the end of each of their turns, on a successful save the abilities that were exchanged swap back to their original creatures. Once you successfully use this ability you must complete a short or long rest before you can attempt it again.

ADDITIONAL SPELLS

DAUDA'S MALEVOLENT DRUDGE

2nd level Conjuraton

Casting Time: 1 Action

Range: 30 ft

Components: V S M (4sp of rotted meat, a crystallized eye)

Duration: 1 minute

The caster can call upon the dark powers of Dauda to summon a dark servant. You have complete control over this creature for the duration. They act on your initiative but you must use a bonus action to control them. Roll 1d6 to determine what kind of servant is summoned.

1 - Skeleton (¼ CR), 2 - Swarm of Bats (¼ CR), 3 - Worg (½ CR), 4 - Shadow (½ CR) 5 - Warhorse Skeleton (½ CR), 6 - Death Dog (1 CR)

DAUDA'S BLACK FLAME

3rd level Evocation

Casting Time: 1 Minute

Range: Touch

Components: V S M (The guts of a small animal, a pinch of skull dust)

Duration: 7 Days

A small black flame with a dull white centre appears on an object you touch. The flame is cold to the touch and emits a faint smell of sulfur. If a creature touches the flame they take 1d4 points of cold damage for every round they are in contact with the dark flame. The light from this flame creates light similar to darkvision, making everything appear in shades of grey, for a 20ft radius centered on the flame. This flame can be dismissed and recalled with an action during the spell's duration.

DAUDA'S HAUNTING VISAGE

5th level Enchantment

Casting Time: 1 Action

Range: 60ft

Components: V S M (A bloodied cloth, gold plated finger bone worth 50gp)

Duration: 1 minute

A horrifying semblance of a humanoid figure suddenly appears in front of the target, throwing them off kilter. The target must make a Wisdom Saving Throw or be cursed by Duada's Haunting Visage for the duration.

A target cursed in this way suffers one of the following conditions, decided by you:

A cursed target can still act as normal but at the start of their turn they must roll a d12, on a roll of 12 the target is frozen in fear, stunned, until the start of their next turn. Additionally the caster can use a reaction when a target attempts to attack them to reduce the attack by a number equal to the caster's Intimidation bonus. Once per turn when a cursed target makes an attack against you can have them roll 1d12 and their attack is reduced by this number. Equally if the target casts a spell that requires a saving throw from you, you can roll 1d12 to gain a bonus to your save equal to the number rolled.

APPENDIX C: THE BALOV AND NPCs

THE BALOV

The Balov is a creature of great stature and presence. He wears simple and ragged cloth clothing. The cloth is dark and worn. In one hand he holds a black iron morningstar that drips with the blood of his previous victims. The most haunting element of his attire is the crude mask he wears. This is the mask Dauda gifted him and what imbues him with much of his power. The mask is one similar to those that accompanied handmade costumes in the 1950s.

THE BALOV

Large undead, lawful evil

Armor Class 17 (Natural Armor)

Hit Points 142 (15d10 + 60)

Speed 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
21 (+5)	12 (+1)	19 (+4)	7 (-2)	8 (-1)	15 (+2)

Skills Athletics +9, Intimidation +10, Stealth +9

Senses blindsight 30 ft., darkvision 120 ft. passive Perception 9

Languages -

Challenge 9 (5000 XP)

Playing Dead. When The Balov is reduced to 0HP for the first time after a long rest, it plays dead. It awakens with the pure instinct to kill after 1d4+1 minutes with hp equal to the minutes it was unconscious. If there are any creatures within 5ft of the Balov he can immediately attack one of these creatures with his fist.

Innate Spellcasting. The the balov's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). The the balov can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

3/day each: *Dauda's Black Flame*, *Dauda's Dark Drudge*, *Dauda's Haunting Visage*, *Misty Step*

ACTIONS

Multiattack. The The Balov makes 3 attacks, 2 with its morningstar and 1 with its fist.

Throttle. When The Balov hits with a fist he can forgo doing damage to restrain the creature by throttling it and lifting it 5ft into the air. The restrained creature can use an action to attempt to break free with a DC21 Athletics check. The Balov has advantage on all melee attacks against a creature it has restrained in this way.

Crush. With a creature restrained The Balov can swap one fist attack for a crush attack. The Balov makes a melee attack against the target. On a hit it deals 3d10 + 5 bludgeoning damage and the target cannot speak until the end of its next turn. After completing the Crush attack the Balov immediately drops the creature it was restraining.



SAMANTHA WESTER

25 years have passed since the public execution of her brother and Sam has done what she can to move on. After the fire Jacob and Elizabeth Loomis took in Sam under the name Penelope in an effort to remove her connection to Charlie and The Balov. They also let the people of Ottkirk think that Sam was killed in the fire that devastated the Wester Family home.

Sam has learnt to keep to herself over the years but that doesn't mean she is an introvert. She is known throughout the town but as nothing more than the niece of the Loomis family. She tries not to think about Charlie and the horrific events that befell him but she wears the Dauda necklace he gave her everyday as a symbol of her loss.

In combat Sam wester has the statistics of a Spy.

SHERIFF SOPHIA

As a former soldier Sophia knows how to take and give orders. She came to Ottkirk to live out her life in the small simple town she grew up in. Sophia doesn't believe the myth of The Balov is anything more than a legend that haunts Ottkirk but really she is afraid that if it is real then it is something for which she is completely unequipped. She wasn't living in Ottkirk when the hanging happened.

In combat Sophia has the statistics of a Veteran.

APPENDIX D: MAP OF OTTKIRK AND ADDITIONAL LOCATIONS

OTTKIRK

Population, 231
98 Human, 1% Half-Elf, 1% Other.

THE GRAVEYARD

The Ottkirk Cemetery sits on the edge of the town and opens out into the woods that surround Ottkirk's western side. The headstones are mostly simple carved wooden steles with the odd few, more recent, stone slabs.

THE TEMPLE

In this town rests what was once a lavish Temple. However since the death of Charlie Wester it has fallen into disrepair as most of the citizens do not visit or believe in the gods after the curse of The Balov many years ago. The god of this temple has been intentionally left up to the DM to better fit it into the pantheon of your world. A thematic suggestion would be a Good aligned God of Light or Life.

PECKING POINT

Up a thin winding path that looks over the rest of the town from the North Eastern edge sits Pecking Point. Once an area where the teenagers went to hook up without their parents knowledge it is now little more than the scene of a tragic killing. Two teenage humans were killed by The Balov here hours before his attack at The Lonely Maiden. Depending on how long after the attack the party visit this location it will be in various states of clean up. If they visit after the meeting in the town square there will be a small display of flowers in memory of the victims.



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All art illustrated by Samantha Ward.

Original templet provided by /u/THE_SINGULAR_ANYONE and his blog, WALROCK HOMEBREW

MAP CREATED WITH INKARNATE PRO

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