

# The Curse of Ravenmere

*by Simon Forster*



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by

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An Adventure for low-level characters

DESIGNED FOR USE WITH THE  
ADVENTURER CONQUEROR KING SYSTEM (AUTARCH.CO)  
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# ADVENTURE

## BACKGROUND

**Ravenmere** is a small village situated between the market towns of Appleby and Cricklewood, and once supplied both with dairy and the wool.

Today the village lies quiet, seemingly empty, for a curse has come to Ravenmere and all of its villagers are dead by their own hands.

A week ago the village pond drained away when the bottom collapsed, revealing what a local farmer discovered to be a burial mound hidden beneath the pond that gives the village part of its name. Inside this mound was the brittle skeleton of a man, clutching an ancient, well-worn spear that caught the light in a strange way. The

farmer took the spear, bringing it to the local church; the priest recognised it from stories he had heard, believing it to be the **Spear of Unkindness**, the legendary weapon of a long dead pagan tribal chieftain dubbed the Raven King. The land upon which the village rests was taken from this tribe by the church, after the knights of Saint Gerald led a crusade to purge the valley of the heathens that dwelt there.

Over the course of the next few days, things started to happen: first came paranoia, then bouts of cruelty, blossoming into violent urges as the days passed. A couple of days later a madness gripped the village, making even the gentlest man act upon murderous urges he felt. In the space of but a few hours, villager was killing villager,

some even slaughtering the cattle and sheep; and all caused by the cursed spear that now lies in the church on the edge of the village.

Merchants came across the blood-soaked village not long after, and reported it to the local sheriff, who told the lord, who ordered the village to be isolated and cordoned off. No one was to enter it, on pain of death; he, and others, believe a plague or evil curse has befallen the village and does not want it to spread. He has no idea what else to do, but is seeking advice from the church at the nearest city. In a week's time word will come that the village is to be razed to the ground, the soil blessed and anointed with holy water, and that no one be allowed to build or farm upon it for a year and a day.

The lord would rather keep

the land and village intact, and would welcome an alternative to destroying it.

This quarantine is bad news for some, such as a shady merchant who has hidden some valuable goods down the well in the centre of the village; another has learnt of the spear through unholy means, and seeks to claim it for himself; while a woman is looking for her husband, who went to the village to buy some sheep and never returned.

Any of these hooks can propel the Player Characters (PCs) into the adventure, or they may also simply stumble upon the seemingly empty village and go exploring.

# THE CURSE



The **Spear of Unkindness** is cursed, causing those within its area of effect to develop increasing bouts of paranoia and cruelty, which grow into violent urges and eventually a murderous rage against all living things. Ultimately, the curse kills the afflicted, so long as the victims remain in the vicinity of the unholy spear.

In game terms, the best way to referee the curse is to simply heighten the players natural sense of paranoia that lies within during any adventure: their characters hear noises, feel that they are being watched, think they see something out of the corner of their eye, or believe someone they meet, or their own allies, are hiding something from them. The cruelty and violent urges can be

explained away by putting temptation in their way, or just telling the player that, for a brief moment, they experience a flash of sadism or anger, and allow them to react as they will.

The only time the referee should call for an out-of-character action, with an appropriate saving throw (use *spells* as a default) is when the spear itself is used or possessed for more than a turn. Unless that happens, allow the players to role-play their characters as they will; just supply them with false sightings, noises and glimpses to heighten their sense of something being unnatural.



# THE RAVENS

Whether it is the curse, the dead or something else, the recent events in the village has attracted a peculiar flock of ravens; these birds roost in the surrounding woods, unseen until they make themselves known. They are quieter than they should be, seemingly intelligent and aware of what is happening around them, and have black hearts full of malice and cruelty.

When the PCs first enter the village, a lone raven sits atop the church, watching them.

After that initial encounter, every time the PCs (one, some or all) enter and exit one of the buildings, another raven is discovered perching on the nearest roof, also watching them with its beady black eyes. They simply watch, until they

either outnumber the PCs at least three-to-one, or they are attacked: then the ravens flock together and swarm, attacking the PCs until they are driven away or killed.

An hour later, another lone raven lands on the church roof, and it starts all over again.

Whether they follow the spear and leave the village is up to the referee.

## An Unkindness of Ravens

*(flock of birds, size of large cats)*

**Armour Class** 3 (as leather/shield)

**Move** 20' (60') foot,  
60' (180') flying

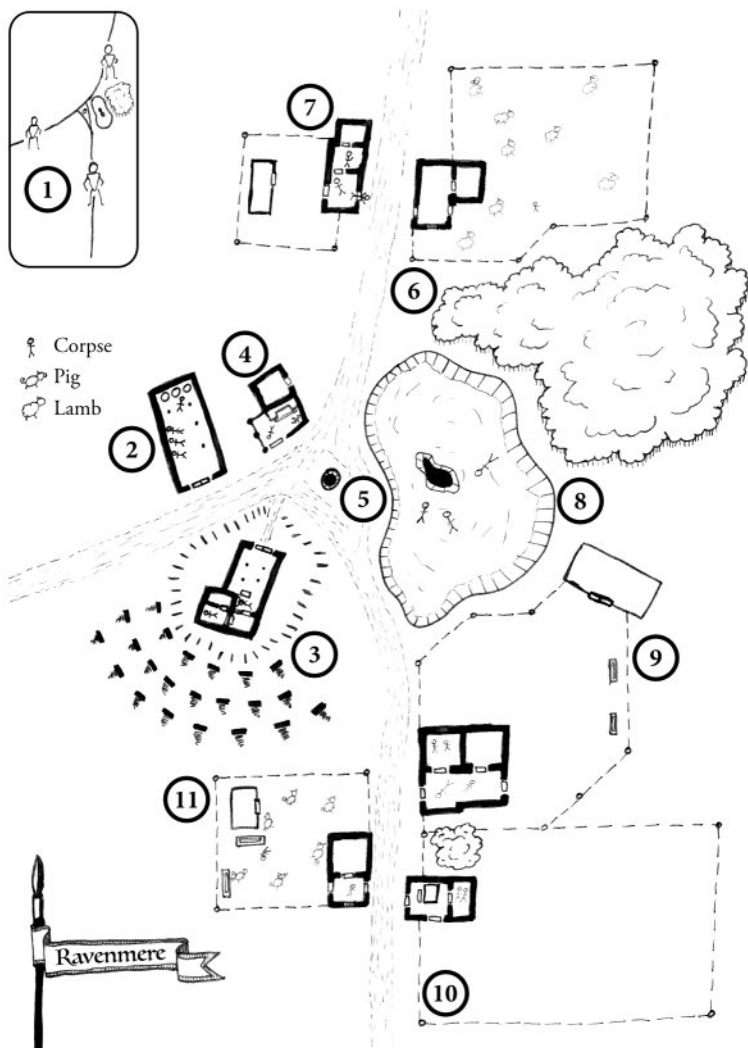
**Hit Dice** 1

**# Attacks** 1 (pecking or talons)

**Damage** 1d4

**Morale** 10 (+2)

**Special:** on an attack roll of a natural 20, target must make a saving throw (*paralysis*) or have an eye pecked out.



# VILLAGE KEY

1. The Watchmen
2. The Barn
3. Church
4. Blacksmith
5. The Well
6. Sheep Farm
7. Fowl Farm
8. The Mere
9. Cattle Farm
10. Wheat Field
11. Pig Sty

# THE VILLAGE

Ravenmere boasts a blacksmith, church, and several farms. There is also a barn used as both a small tavern, and offers travellers a place to spend the night if they cannot make it to one of the nearby towns.

## 1. The Watchmen

Keeping an eye on the village and ensuring that no one enters (or, god forbid, leaves), three sets of the lord's men-at-arms stand guard at the three main paths, some distance from the village.

They are wary of strangers, and will hail anyone approaching, warning them off. If provoked, attacked, or if someone is seen trying to exit the village, they will fight. However, none of them want to go into the plague-ridden

village and will not pursue anyone foolish enough to enter; but they will do their best to ensure that no one leaves, using their crossbows to shoot anyone trying to do so.

However, they can be persuaded to let adventurers inside if they intend to rid the village of the plague on behalf of their lord, as they know he is eager to see the village restored.

#### **Watchmen**

*(six in total, two at each point)*

**Armour Class** 2 (as leather)

**Move** 40' (120')

**Hit Dice** 0-Level; 1d6 hps

**# Attacks** 1 (by weapon)

**Damage** 1d6

**Morale** 7 (+0)

*Carry dagger, short sword, light crossbow (10 bolts), and a single lantern with a flask of oil at each site.*

## **2. The Barn**

The barn has a row of beer kegs, a crude wooden counter, and a loft with straw bedding for travellers who sometimes spent the night.

Three mutilated women lay along one wall, throats slit and bodies defiled.

An old man lies near them, death by strangulation.

A dozen chickens have been thrown around, each with a broken neck and legs torn off.

Behind the bar is a hidden box with a few coins (**2d12 cp**, **2d8 sp**, **1d6 gp**), as well as the local 'barman', the farmer who looked after the main body of sheep, who lies dead with a pitchfork sticking out of his chest.

## **3. Church**

This large stone church is where the **Spear of Unkindness**

can be found, lying upon the altar. A priest and his acolyte lived here, holding services every day for the masses.

The acolyte has been nailed to the large cross hanging behind the altar, which is sprayed with blood, dried and staining the creamy stone. His face has all but been eaten away by birds, with maggots oozing out of his eyes and flies feasting on his rotting flesh.

In the study at the back of the church, through a locked door, is a small library and a chest holding the meagre collection that church last gathered (**1d100 cp, 1d20 sp**). The books, if studied, tell of the history of the village and mentions the fact that the land was once tribal land, which the church took by force.

Behind the desk is the priest, who bled to death after he cut

himself repeatedly across his arms and upper chest.

#### **4. Blacksmith**

This stone building has a cold forge, tools and an assortment of forged goods spilled across a hard-packed floor that is stained dark with old blood.

A young boy, his head caved in by a hammer and his bare arms scarred with burns, lies sprawled on the floor; his decaying body is riddled with maggots and a swarm of flies lifts off when anyone approaches.

Huddled in a corner is the sole surviving villager: the blacksmith called **Diggory Smith**, who is crazed, terrified but full of murderous rage.

He is conflicted, and will attack anyone who enters the smithy or if he hears anyone outside and they remain for

more than a turn, at which point he charges out, intent on murder.

### **Crazed Blacksmith**

**Armour Class** 2 (as leather)

**Move** 40' (120')

**Hit Dice** 2

**# Attacks** 1 (hammer)

**Damage** 1d6

**Morale** 12 (+4)

*Ignores pain*

*Wields a heavy hammer.*

### **5. The Well**

In the middle of the village sits an old well. At the bottom of the well is both a waterproof skin holding valuables and the missing husband (page 2), disembowelled.

Partially hidden by the water is an iron door, which leads into a forgotten tomb from long, long ago (see pages 11-12).

The water is two-thirds up

the rusted iron door, jammed shut, its lock rusted. It requires an **Open Doors** check to force.

### **6. Sheep Farm**

This farm is empty, but the adjacent field is full of dead sheep that have been butchered.

Amongst them lies the baby of the farmers who lived here, smashed to so much of a pulp that it is barely recognisable as anything other than a mess of rotten meat and splintered bones.

### **7. Fowl Farm**

Another dead family, with the husband tied-up and tortured to death; his wife died from a short sword in her back, and a young girl (about ten) was slashed across the throat and left to rot in the doorway. Searching the house uncovers a

suit of leather armour, an old and worn wooden shield bearing the lord's colours, and a few coins

### **8. The Mere**

This deep pond has dried up and there is a large hole in the centre, an opening that leads down into the buried mound (see page 13-14).

Three farmers lie face-down in the pond, two with broken necks and the other with his head smashed in. (2d6 sp, 1d12 cp).

### **9. Cattle Farm**

A family of four lies here dead; husband and wife, one stabbed with the blood encrusted kitchen knife that rests by the bodies, the other with a broken neck, fingers and legs.

Two children, ten and seven, have been suffocated with

pillows in their bedrooms.

### **10. Wheat Field**

An old couple lie dead in their beds, both with their wrists slit; the sheets are rigid with dried blood that coats them. In the field are several dead cats, decapitated.

### **11. Pig Sty**

Amongst half-a-dozen butchered pigs a young farmer lies curled up in a ball; he is dead, beaten so badly that his heart gave out.

In the farmhouse is a young woman, her eyes gouged out by a trowel, with a dead cat in her hands, which are tight around its broken neck.







# FORGOTTEN TOMB

An ancient tomb, pre-dating even the barrow of the Raven King lies hidden within the well, which once serviced a long lost temple.

## 1. Bottom of the Well

A ledge holds the hidden valuables (five stolen **gem stones**, total **1,000 gp** value) and a disembodied corpse (see page 2).

## 2. Antechamber

Bones litter the floor of this room. If the door is forced open, the water floods the room up to the level of the second (jammed) door.

Opening the second door triggers a magical trap: the bones in the room animate, and five skeletons rise out of the water to defend the tomb.

**Skeleton** (5)

**Armour Class** 2

**Move** 40' (120')

**Hit Dice** 1

**# Attacks** 1 (clawing fingers)

**Damage** 1d6

**Morale** n/a

*Undead immunities.*

*(ACKS page 193).*

## 3. Tomb

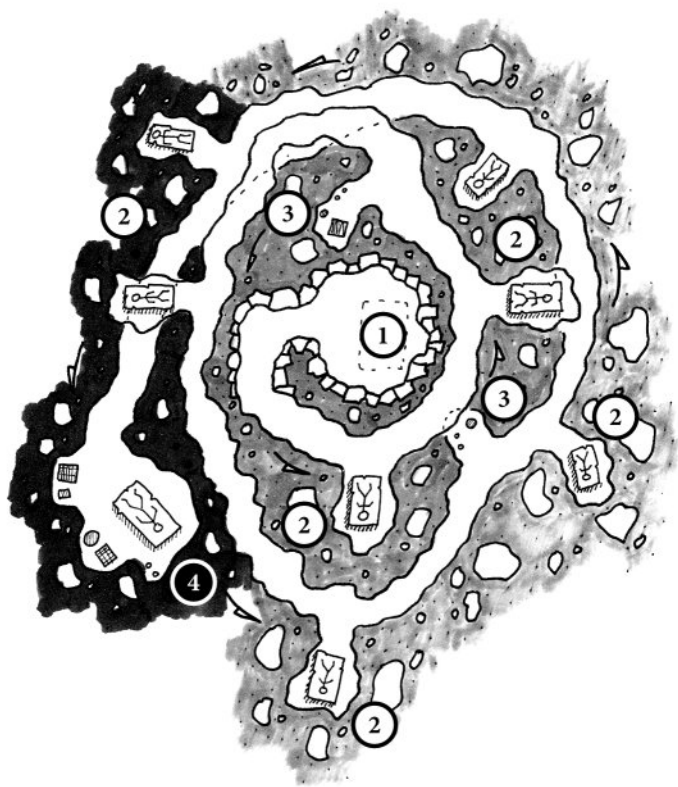
A dank cave housing a stone sarcophagus and artefacts in rusty iron containers. A corpse, brittle and little more than a skin-clad skeleton, lies sprawled in a corner, neck broken.

The corpse is clad in leather armour, carries thieves' tools and a blunt short sword.

In the containers are antique coins (**1,200 cp**, **725 sp**, **125 gp**, **15 pp**), and 1d4 **gems** (200 gp each).

The sarcophagus is empty, with claw marks on the inside.





# THE BARROW

Buried beneath the mere is a spiralling barrow.

## 1. Entrance

Broken stones litter the floor, blood stains the tunnel floor and walls. This is where the spear was found, lying on the floor.

## 2. Waiting Dead

Each of these seven alcoves holds a skeleton wrapped in leathery human skin. An iron sword lies at the feet of each.

These will raise as undead **Skeletons** (as page 12) if their King rises again.

## 3. Offerings

These alcoves hold simple offerings: **dream-catchers** of glass, wood and fragile feathers (1d6 trinkets, 25 gp each); **sil-**

**ver coins** (2d12 sp) and **tiger agate gems** (1d4, 50 gp each).

## 4. The Raven King

Laid out on a black marble table is the skeletal remains of the **Raven King**, clad in ancient mail. Offerings (as above, double value) are stored in wicker baskets and boxes.

If the **Spear of Unkindness** is placed in his hands, the curse is lifted from the village, and the Raven King is awakened from his slumber. He will seek to reclaim his kingdom.

### Raven King

**Armour Class** 4

**Move** 40' (120')

**Hit Dice** 5

**# Attacks** 1 (spear or claws)

**Damage** 1d6+2 & paralysis

**Morale** n/a

*Undead immunities; touch causes paralysis for 1d4 turns*



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