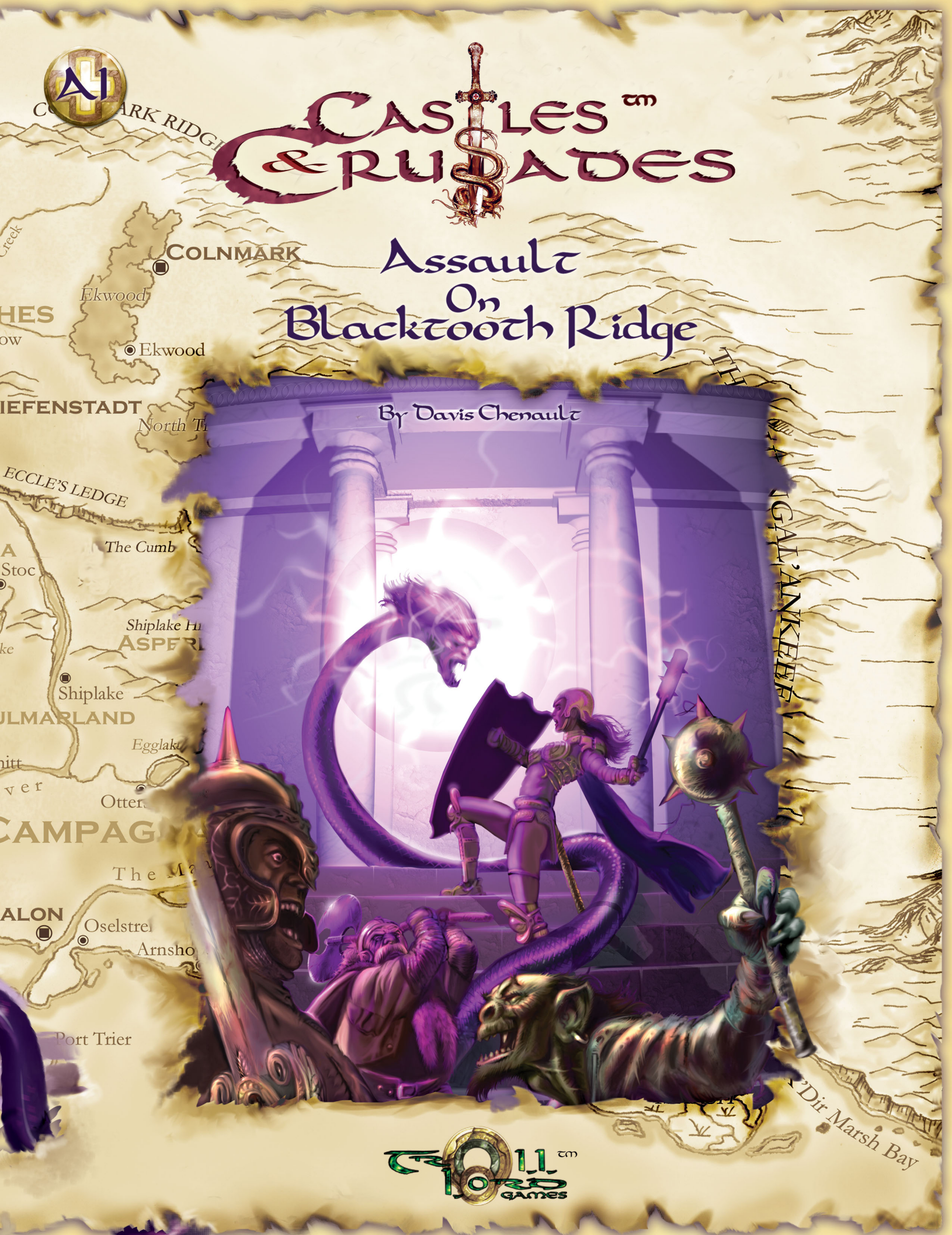




# CASTLES<sup>™</sup> & CRUIADES

## Assault On Blacktooth Ridge

By Davis Chenault



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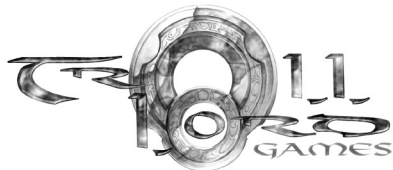
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# ASSAULT ON BLACKTOOTH RIDGE

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This module is designed for characters of 1st-2nd level with a challenge level of 0-1.

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# Assault on Blacktooth Ridge

This module is designed primarily for adventurers who have just recently begun on their path to glory, wealth and fame. In all, it should allow characters a safe place from which to begin exploring a dangerous region, accumulate some wealth, some enemies and even some friends. If properly executed and attention given to small details, it will allow for the development of plots and themes of numerous types and natures which should engage the characters for several gaming sessions, if not more.

There is an underlying plot and theme for Assault on Blacktooth Ridge which allows for an initial adventuring focus and continuation in the next module, The Slag Heap. However, this is by no means the only plot or theme in the module. There are numerous monsters, creatures and non-player characters who have little or no relation to the plot underpinning the adventure. They act of their own accord, usually at odds with others in the setting and tangentially to those related to the plot. Those many persons in Botkinburg and the encounters in the surrounding forest and along the Blacktooth Ridge offer adventures unto themselves; adventures that can lead to further encounters, quests and activities wholly unrelated to the one at hand. Allow the players time to explore these tangents if they desire and develop them as necessary. It matters little if the players stray from the central theme as long as they are having fun. The plots and themes in the adventure should unfold with time and exploration rather than being foisted upon the players. Allow them to discover and explore rather than follow some arbitrary scenario, as this is their tale to weave.

The first part of this module contains a brief history of the region, the underlying plot, and a description of the town of Botkinburg. The second part of the module contains encounters along the Blacktooth Ridge and the dungeon of Vargolg where a band of goblins have taken up residence. For ease of reference, maps of the region Botkinburg and the dungeons are located on the module's flaps.

This adventure is designed for 3-5 characters of 1st-2nd level but, should a larger number of characters be participating in the adventure or their average level be much higher than 2nd, the number of creatures encountered in the adventure needs to be increased to better challenge the characters. Encounters can also be augmented by increasing the hit points of various creatures, increasing their armor class, or giving them weapons which do more damage. In general, the challenge level for most attribute checks should be 0 or 1, unless otherwise noted. The challenge level can be increased to 3 if there are a large number of players or higher level characters are being used.

## Introduction

The town of Botkinburg lies far from the settled lands of the south and the fabled Kingdom of Outremere. It sits upon a bend in the Hruesen River in the shadows of the slopes of the rugged hills of the Blacktooth Ridge, in a land known as the Barren Wood. However, it was not always referred to in such dour tones. In happier days this land was a wild forested country, named the Hruesen. The forest was of an exceedingly large expanse and filled with many beasts as well as settlements of man, halfling and elf. The great ridge offered hunting aplenty and was called by men the Highlands and by the elves the Avishean Ridge. There was peace in the country and little troubled the folk who lived there. But the world's ages turned, and so with it the fortunes of those in that wondrous wood.

Long ago, beyond the memory of most in the Barren Wood, a power arose in the north and the whole part of the world fell under the rueful eye of a great and evil lord, The Horned One, as he was named. In those days, the Horned One's shadow hung over all the world and he ruled from the great fortress of Aufstrag. When the Horned One first conquered these lands many aeons ago, it was restless and troublesome as its inhabitants, fay of many type and stalwart men of noble bearing, did not easily bend to his will. So it was, after many a rebellion and uprising, the Horned One turned his armies loose upon the lands of the Hruesen. A great many orc and goblin issued forth from the foul pits of Aufstrag and laid waste to the lands of the Hruesen, and driving the inhabitants south into the sea, enslaving them or scattering wide the free peoples that had been living there. His evil emptied the forest of its inhabitants and razed all the regions' cities and towns.

For centuries after, the woods and vales of the Hruesen lay abandoned and empty. The ridge now stood forth from the wasteland as a great black scar as the orcs occupied it and made it a fortress of sorts. They tunneled beneath it and built squat towers upon it. They carted folk to the Ridge as slaves and there they became lost to memory. The ridge was called anew, now the Blacktooth Ridge, as it devoured all that entered it and the lands about were renamed the Barren Wood for little remained of that once great forest.

The fortunes of those lands changed only with the passing of that malicious monarch and the dissolution of his kingdom. Aufstrag was made a shell of its former self, if not wholly destroyed and the evil hosts of the Horned One scattered to the winds. For many years the lands knew peace, though they never flourished again. The evil which had resided here passed into memory or vanished into the deep recesses of those hills. Thus the world stood for many years.

In time elves, in search of ancient homelands and shrines, and men, in search of fertile and peaceful lands to farm, returned and settled in the Barren Wood; quickly forgetting, or choosing to forget, that each new age fosters new challenges and past evils often haunt the hopes of the future. As the elves and humans returned, so too arrived remnants of the Horned One's armies; for the Blacktooth Ridge lies in the shadow of Aufstrag and the fell pits of that horrid place are a never-ending source of foul creatures hungry for the easy pickings of the world of man and elf. Now many creatures long away from this land find its fresh fields and peaceful inhabitants easy filling for their gluttonous desires.

As for Botkinburg, it was one of many new towns and thorpe that were settled after the fall of the Horned One. Several fishermen, hunters, traders and foresters along with their families founded the village, building near where an ancient stone bridge crossed over the Hruesen River. In those early days, the village consisted of little more than makeshift houses and hovels huddled together along the banks of the river. The settlement became permanent as the clean and meandering Hruesen River proved an abundant source of fish and the pastures about very fertile. Few creatures or maleficent beasts roamed those parts as the town took shape. They named the town Stoneway and it quickly prospered, attracting more settlers and later, folk wishing to escape the meaningless wars and petty uprisings in the south and west of the world.

So arrived Clement Botkin, the third in line of a large noble family of Outremere. Clement Botkin chose to make his own way in the world, and after many travails and adventures, arrived in Stoneway where he decided to retire and claim this place as his own. He brought with him several knights and some soldiery and



built a tower in the town. As time passed, the dangers increased and Clement built a stone wall around his tower and enclosed a wide bailey to protect the villagers in times of war. For two generations his family provided protection for the village that eventually bore his name. Through his wisdom and strength, Clement kept the town and its folk safe for many years, until time robbed him of both his wits and his son, who died at the hands of orcs while exploring the Blacktooth Ridge.

Clement's grandson, Volkmar Botkin, has now taken the charge in his father's stead as Clement has grown too feeble of mind and body to do more than moan in pain and eat soup. Volkmar, however, has neither the wisdom nor intelligence of his grandfather or father and so (despite the advice from his loyal servants) has failed to notice and act upon the recent events along the Blacktooth Ridge, events that presage significant trouble for the people of Botkinburg and the whole of the Barren Wood.

### *For the Castle Keeper*

Ludensheim, a town near Botkinburg, has a new ruler, Ritter Dietbold Heimer. He likens himself a baron and seeks to acquire an oath of fealty from Volkmar Botkin and control of Botkinburg. Heimer has too few resources to manage this on his own though, and so has decided to seek help from another source.

Dietbold has concocted a plan to force Volkmar Botkin to come to him for aid. He has offered a notorious band of goblin raiders, the Red Caps (or Rottenkips) gold and a free hand in raiding along the Hruesen River if they focus their raids on Botkinburg. After a time, Dietbold expects Volkmar to come seeking aid to defeat the goblin raiders. In compensation Dietbold will demand fealty

of Volkmar and once given, end the raiding by paying off the Red Caps. In the meantime, Dietbold, through his agents, is supplying the Red Caps with the information they need to raid and making certain that they do not betray him.

The Red Caps, recognizable by the red skullcaps they all wear, are a large band of goblins who have been raiding wealthier towns and trade routes far to the south of the Blacktooth Ridge for a decade or more. They have a frightful reputation and their very name strikes fear into the hearts of normal men. They are lead by the horrid Grallkrug, or 'The Rottenkip' as he is more commonly referred to. Lucky for the inhabitants of Botkinburg, Grallkrug and the vast majority of his band are not in the vicinity; only his lieutenant Marglerod roams these parts. The Red Caps generally do not raid this far north since they use the Blacktooth Ridge and its many abandoned fortresses and caves as hideouts. For his part, Marglerod has decided Dietbold's offer is too good to pass up and, acting without the permission of Grallkrug, carries out the few raids as "agreed" upon with Dietbold. Of course, Marglerod has his own plan and it does not mesh well with Dietbold's. Marglerod plans on following through with the first part of his deal with Dietbold, but intends to continue raiding to extort more gold from him than had previously been agreed upon. To insure that Dietbold understands this, Marglerod kidnapped Dietbold's emissary and several of Botkinburg's inhabitants and now holds them for ransom.

Marglerod is aware that his plans are dangerous. He only has a small contingent of raiders with him and they would not be able to withstand a concerted attack on their dungeon-outpost, so fears retribution by either Dietbold or Volkmar. Further, he has been ordered by Grallkrug to guard their outpost, protect their supplies and treasures and do nothing to attract the locals attention. If Marglerod's plans fail, he will be in great danger, but success may elevate Grallkrug's estimation of him.

Further, Marglerod's raiding has encouraged many of the other denizens of the Blacktooth Ridge and beyond to come out of their forts, dungeons and other hiding places to begin raiding also. Dietbold has, in fact, unleashed through his machinations a horde of problems for the Hruesen River region and no amount of gold or ransom is going to solve it.

### *Involving the Characters*

True adventurers and heroes need little encouragement to travel to unknown lands. The prospect for adventure, glory or treasure is often more than enough. Blacktooth Ridge offers that and to spare. Rumors and tales of easily acquired treasures buried in abandoned forts and treasure houses along the ridge, as well as monsters and beasts lurking in the vicinity of the ridge causing no end of trial and tribulation for the region's inhabitants, should be invitation enough.

However, this may not be enough to attract the more demanding player. There are several reasons, suggested below, for the adventurers to go to Botkinburg. However, what truly brings an adventurer to this place can only be found in the heart of that player's character and not in the place itself.

- 1:** Relatives or friends who live in Botkinburg, perhaps one has died recently.
- 2:** The group is traveling to locate a famed soothsayer and learn what fate has in store for them.
- 3:** The group has been asked to come to Botkinburg by the town leaders to help in fending off attacks by goblin raiders.

# Botkinburg

Botkinburg is located deep in the Barren Wood on a rise overlooking a bend in the Hruesen River. Much of the land surrounding the town has been cleared of trees and now serves as pasture and farmland for row crops. A road leads to Botkinburg from the south, and another less traveled road heads off to the north. The town consists of small wooden and stone houses with thatched and shingled roofs. These are clumped together around a large stone keep located on the highest point of the rise. Botkinburg is mostly inhabited by humans but has a sizable halfling population who live close to one another around several large hills on the west side of the village. They interact freely with the rest of Botkinburg's population, though they are viewed with caution and circumspection by some of the human members of the community.

Botkinburg is not a wealthy community. Its inhabitants are mostly farmers or fishermen with a few skilled tradesmen among them. It is self sufficient, though trades with other communities for rare foodstuffs or manufactured goods in exchange for salted fish, lumber and dairy products. Every month during the summer an open market is held at the Oak Grove, a sacred place near the town's square. This usually attracts several outsiders pawning their wares. Other than this, most commerce and trade is conducted between families and individuals and is generally in the form of barter rather than with coin. The closest Botkinburg has to a store is the Bent Hook, a local tavern. The proprietor stocks a small amount of items imported from the wealthier communities to the south and north which the locals may find useful.

The days of most in Botkinburg are spent in the pastures, on the river, or in gardens with the crops. The pastures have a mixture of sheep and dairy cattle grazing in them during the day. These are brought in every evening and taken out every morning to the cacophonous sound of cow and sheep bells, bleating sheep, mewing cows, barking herd dogs and the calls of herdsman. Crops are plentiful and cheaply purchased as most have full larders.

Most in the community worship at the Chancel, a temple devoted to the many deities who watch over the lands of man and halfling, fertility, herding, or harvest and the Hruesen River in particular. Rituals and devotionals to the deities are held on numerous occasions and often accompanied by large communal gatherings during which beer and food are plentiful and served freely. On other occasions, fasting and abstinence are called for. Most of the farmers and fishermen as well as the halflings, also worship at the Oak Grove, a shrine serving the deities of the sun and moon, plenty and harvest and the fairy queen. There are many rituals the people of Botkinburg follow on a daily basis to keep the evil spirits away and mollify the various fay that still reside in the surrounding forests.

There are roughly 300 people living in Botkinburg with an additional 50 halflings. Unless noted otherwise, all the human inhabitants of Botkinburg are treated as humans. In times of conflict, a militia can be called up. It consists of nearly 30 adult humans.

Humans (*Their vital stats are: HD1d4, HP 4, AC 10, neutral. They carry clothing and if carrying a weapon they have a knife or handaxe and 1d6cp. Children and young adults have 1-2 hp.*)

Halflings (*Their vital stats are: HD 1d4, HP 4, AC 11, neutral good. They carry clothing and if carrying a weapon they have a staff, knife or handaxe.*)

The following are descriptions of the more notable places and people in Botkinburg. This is followed by a rumor table that mixes both truth and fiction.

**Area 1: The Bent Hook or Ortof's House of Sludge** The Bent Hook, locally known as Ortof's House of Sludge, is the only tavern in Botkinburg. It is owned (but not operated) by Ortof Heimpel. His sons and daughters, their spouses and their children manage the establishment while Ortof whiles away his few remaining years consuming vast quantities of ale and mutton at a table in the center of the common room. Besides serving large platters of food, dark brews and offering rooms to weary travelers, the Bent Hook serves as the community's gathering place and, when necessary, Town Hall. It is a popular establishment and frequented by most every member of the community, at one time or another, during the week. The Bent Hook is especially crowded when inclement weather makes work in the fields difficult, during festivals or times of community concern.

The main building is a large, square two story establishment with a stone facing on the lower floor and wooden planked facing for the upper floor. The roof is made of red slate and steeply pitched to accommodate heavy snows during winter and has a cluster of chimneys and heating pipes poking out of it. The rear of the Bent Hook has a single floored wood planked rear attachment that houses the kitchen and storerooms. Behind the tavern is a large yard, enclosed by a stout stone wall and fence, with a barn and stables at one end and the Heimpel's house at the other.

The door to the common room is almost always open and, other than in the late hours of the night, one of the many Heimpel's are around cleaning, fixing, cooking, sleeping, drinking or eating but are always willing to serve a customer. The room is spacious though the paneling of the interior is so darkly stained from years of collected smoke and grime that it is dark and, without the glow of friendly fires, lanterns or candles, can be brooding and oppressive. There are many tables and chairs of all shapes and sizes haphazardly scattered about the room and two large stone faced fireplaces at either end of the room. A staircase leads up to the second floor of the establishment while two large oaken doors open on to the brewery and the kitchen beyond.

The second floor is a series of rooms for let. The largest is a common room where several coppers gives one a place to sleep on the floor for the evening. During festivals or markets this room is often full. There are six other rooms for let at 1sp a night, each essentially the same. These rooms contain four large oak beds that nearly fill up the entire space, a single table and one trunk.

The Bent Hook is also known as Ortof's House of Sludge due to its dark brown, near black brew. 'Officially,' the Heimpel's call the brew Kaiserren Bock or the Kings Brew. However, it is of such a dark and viscous nature that it eventually became known as River Sludge, or just Sludge. Other than the 'the Sludge,' the Bent Hook serves a decent, though local fair. The food consists mostly of take from the river and is served fried, boiled, broiled, stewed, grilled and even raw. Other meats like cattle and poultry are also available though tend to be more expensive. Locally grown vegetables such as potatoes, carrots, spinach, cabbage and legumes such as pinto beans, lima beans and red beans augment most meals. Supplies of food are plentiful overall and prices cheap. A full meal can cost as little as 1sp but soups and breads are cheaper while elaborate meals can cost as much as 1gp. The beer is cheap, costing 5cp a tankard.

The common room is often full and talk is plentiful though mundane. However, of late, there have been several raids by goblins and other more 'horrid' creatures who take cattle and burn food stores. These stories are related with much exaggeration and occasional outright fabrication. Talk has just recently been dominated by the disappearance of the Molkin twins, who tend cattle out in the pastures. They have disappeared without a trace and many claim an evil magic is afoot and the 'Wood Witch', an old hag who lives deep in the Barren Wood, has returned.

There are several guests staying at the Bent Hook.

Uther Shoder (*He is a 3rd level lawful good human knight. His vital stats are: HP 15, AC 15. His primes are Str, Int, Chr. His attributes are Str 13, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 14, Chr 13. He has a riding horse with all the accouterments. He carries a chain coat, shield, helmet, longsword, longsword, halberd, lance, dagger, 125gp, 77sp and 14pp.*) Uthar is from a barony to the south and, after having been rebuffed by Volkmar Botkin, is attempting to gather some stalwart men in order to wrest away his inheritance and lands from an uncle whom he claims has illegally taken it. He has two loyal retainers traveling with him. All share one room.

Farank and Helda: These are members of the tinkers caravan located near the Oak Grove. They just married and are spending their nuptial nights in the Inn. They have a single room.

Malinamous: (*He is a 3rd level neutral good human wizard. His vital stats are: HP 8, AC 10. His prime attributes are Dex, Int, Wis. His attributes are Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 17, Wis 14, Chr 14. He is carrying a spellbook, clothing, 5 daggers, a pouch with spell components, a wand of fire balls with 6 charges. His daily spells are – Zero: dancing lights, detect magic, detect poison, message, 1st: comprehend languages, hold portal, jump, spider climb, 2nd: acid arrow, enhance attribute.*) This young wizard has traveled here from the west in search of employment or adventure. Having arrived and found the region too dangerous for a lone man to travel in, has decided to bide his time and await more interesting happenings or if traveling companions can be found. He is willing, though reluctant, to head out into the wilderness. He is staying in the common room.

Gurdin: (*He is a 3rd level neutral evil dwarf assassin. His vital stats are: HP 14, AC14. His prime attributes are Dex, Int. His attributes are Str 10, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Chr 10. He carries 2 daggers, light crossbow, short sword, leather armor, mason equipment and 50gp.*) Gurdin is an agent of Dietbold. This dour old dwarf claims to be here looking for a job as a mason at the fortress. He has tried on several occasions to get work there but has not been hired on yet. He needs to use the job to gather information on what Volkmar is doing. Once a month he travels to Ludensheim to visit 'relatives,' as he says, but in reality he reports to his superiors there. He would be very interested in what the characters are doing along the Blacktooth Ridge and might be willing to travel with them if they appear to be close to acquiring some information he would rather they did not. He is staying in the common room.

**Area 2: The Keep** The Keep is an impressive large square tower with a bartizan at each corner of the roof. The tower is made entirely of stone and has three floors, and cellar beneath it. It is about 50 feet tall at the roof's peak. The Botkin family banner, purple over red with eagle claws, tops the keep and is visible for miles around. There is one entry to the Keep on its west side and

facing the river. The large oaken doors to the Keep have a smaller inset door that is usually open, and guarded by several men-at-arms.

The Keep houses the Botkin family and all their retainers. Volkmar Botkin and his grandfather Clement are both here. Clement has aged poorly and is little more than a tottering old man on his death bed. Volkmar, young and in the prime of his life, appears eager and willing to engage with the world around him. However, this is an appearance only for Volkmar is not terribly intelligent, is a poor judge of character and more concerned with his pomp and position than with actually performing the duties as the protector of Botkinburg. He is willing to entertain visitors of some renown and listens to stories and tales of evil doings and evil creatures along the Blacktooth Ridge, but considers them to be no more than 'the fears of old wives and tales of peasants.' He traditionally chooses one day a month where the locals can come to him to settle disputes, an act which he takes great pleasure in.

Volkmar's attitude has angered Clement Botkin's longtime ally and friend, Aldadius Mastinfelderin, a wizard of some repute. However, out of loyalty to the dying Clement, Aldadius keeps his thoughts and advice to himself only awaiting Clement's death to assert his power in the Keep. He also maintains his distance from the inhabitants of Botkinburg, considering them little more than subjects. He is willing to take on any apprentice if they appear well disciplined and highly motivated to learn and work.

The Botkins' extended family also lives within the keep. Volkmar's wife Inelda, unhappy to be in so desolate a region, is desperate to leave. Volkmar's uncle Frekin, who lost an arm long ago in battle with an orc, is now in charge of the Keep's soldiery. Young Thadius Seedmayer, Volkmar's first cousin, an honorable knight believes his talents and calling are for fields greater than Botkinburg. There are ten well armed men at arms and a sergeant at arms who live here as well. There are others, each with their own particular and peculiar habits and desires. Many get along well with the locals but several chafe at such a rustic lifestyle and pine for the lands of the south where royalty is well treated and shown greater respect.

Within the bowels of the cellar there is a secret chamber housing Clement Botkin's vast treasures. Neither Volkmar Botkin nor any of the family know of its location as Clement only departed that to Aldadius. Aldadius is not revealing the location of the treasury as he fears it will be squandered. The treasury contains 400pp, 1600gp, 4000sp, and 7000cp. Additionally there are gems valued at 4000gp and jewelry valued at 2000gp. There are 10 arcane scrolls (random spells), 15 divine scrolls (random spells), a wand of magic missiles [30 charges], a set of +3 chain, a +2 halberd and a +3 short bow with 15 +1 arrows.

Volkmar (*He is a 4th level chaotic neutral human fighter. His vital stats are: HP 27, AC 15. His primes are Str, Dex, Con. His attributes are Str 7, Dex 5, Con 10, Int 8, Wis 9, Chr 10. He is carrying banded mail, large shield, long bow, +2 battle axe and a ring of fire resistance.*)

Thadius (*He is a 5th level lawful neutral human knight. His vital stats are HP 36, AC 19. His primes are Str, Wis, Chr. His attributes are Str 16, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Chr 10. He carries +2 splint mail, large shield, +1 longsword, helm of arrow deflection which gives him a +2 vs missile weapons, lance, light war horse named Hammerhoof and a ring of magic resistance that gives him +2 on saves vs arcane magical effects.*)

Warhorse, Hammerhoof (*Her vital stats are: HD 3d10, HP 17, AC 13, neutral. Her prime attribute is physical. She attacks with two hoofs 1d4+2 and a bite 1d4.*)

Frekin (*He is a 6th level chaotic neutral fighter. His vital stats are: HP 43, AC 18. His primes are Str, Dex, Con. His attributes are Str 15, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 14, Chr 11. He has a riding horse with all the accouterments. He carries a chain coat, shield of blows which confers a +2 to armor class and absorbs one point of damage each round, helmet, longsword, spear, dagger. All Frekin's dexterity attribute checks are made at -2.*)

Aldadius (*He is an 8th level lawful neutral wizard. His vital stats are: HP 22, AC 16. His primes are Con, Int, Wis. His attributes are Str 14, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 10, Chr 10. He carries a ring of protection +3, padded armor, cloak of displacement, 3 +1 daggers, wand of fireballs with 16 charges. His daily spells are: Zero – endure elements, ghost sound, light, mage hand, message; 1st – alter size, charm person, change self, shield, shocking grasp; 2nd – detect thoughts, fog cloud, levitate, scare; 3rd – blink, dispel magic, stinking cloud; 4th – detect scrying, wall of fire.*)

Sergeant at Arms (*He is a 3rd level chaotic neutral human fighter. His vital stats are: HP 21, AC 18. His primes are Str, Dex, Con. His attributes are Str 14, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 10, Chr 10. He carries banded mail, large shield, long bow, battle axe and has 14 gp.*)

10 Men at Arms (*Their vital stats are HD 1d6, AC 14, neutral good. Their primary attributes are physical. They are carrying studded leather, large shield, short bow, battle axe.*)

**Area 3: The Chancel** This is a temple where the many gods, whom the locals worship, are paid homage to. It is a large wooden structure with several floors and two tall, thin towers rising from its center. Most of the inhabitants have helped construct one portion or another of this temple, and the town considers it, collectively, their own. The Chancel is overseen by Hermannus Tersteeg and his followers.

Hermannus is middle aged and getting plump. After having studied in the great Chancels of the south, Hermannus plunged into the northlands to locate a good place to build a new temple. After many adventures and escapades for which he is locally famous, Hermannus decided to settle in Botkinburg and offer his services to the community. He is well liked and much more respected than Volkmar Botkin. He keeps his personal affairs to himself but is very kind and giving to the locals. After settling in, Hermannus became quite comfortable with his position and the Chancel itself. He put on some weight, grew a beard and relaxed in his new found and peaceful life. However, troubling portents have, of late, caused him much consternation. Hermannus is tense and spends a great deal of time at the altar trying to divine the future of Botkinburg or disprove what is stirring in the lands about. All to no avail.

Hermannus does not travel outside of Botkinburg to help the characters unless they happen to be on the route to one of the three neighboring villages which he visits once a month or so. He has, after settling in, become somewhat cowardly and fearful for his life. As such, he chooses not to spend it frivolously and rationalizes this decision by claiming the town depends on him too much for his life to be spent cheaply.

There are three other priests living in the Chancel. Two arrived in the past year, Dionijs and Bertis. Both came in search of Hermannus whose fame in the south has only grown with his absence. The other, Maik Felder is the son of a local farmer, Steffan Felder.

Dionijs sincerely likes Hermannus and admires him. The same is true of Maik. Both are often seen with Hermannus though rarely with one another as Dionijs finds Maik too rustic while Maik finds Dionijs too sleek and civilized to be trusted. Bertis seems to get on well with both of them.

However, Bertis finds Hermannus to have grown weak and chaffs at his manners. And, though seemingly friendly with Dionijs and Maik, he believes neither are worthy enough to wear the vestments of the Chancel. The lack of fulfillment at the Chancel in Botkinburg has lead Bertis to seek wisdom elsewhere. For some time, Bertis has been making trips to Ludensheim to visit the Chancel there. He has fallen under the influence of Imgard Pifnor, the High Priest at Ludensheim to whom he tells of the happenings at the Chancel.

The treasury for the Chancel is in the basement behind a secret door in Hermannus' room. It contains numerous gold objects and vestments worth 1000gp. There is also a chest with years worth of collections in it. There are 250gp, 500sp and 1000cp locked in it. This is also where Hermannus keeps his valuables and accouterments of war – +2 banded mail, shield, +2 footman's flail, battle tabard and helmet, 9 scrolls: 3x cure light wounds, 2x delay poison, remove paralysis, prayer, continual flame, and aid, a ring of protection from evil and his personal holdings of 150gp, 200sp, 400cp.

Hermannus Tersteeg (*He is a 6th level neutral good human cleric. His vital stats are: HP 35, AC 20. His primes are Str, Con, Wis. His attributes are Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 16, Chr 10. He carries clothing and vestments. His daily spells are – Zero: create water, detect magic, detect poison, first Aid x 2, purify food and drink; 1st: bless water, command, cure light wounds x 2; 2nd: augury, delay poison, hold person, lesser restoration; 3rd: create food and water, remove disease.*)

Dionijs (*He is a 2nd level neutral human cleric. His vital stats are: HP 10, AC 15. His primes are Dex, Wis, Chr. His attributes are Str 10, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 10, Chr 10. He carries scale shirt, shield, mace, spear, 1 cure light wounds scroll, 14gp, 28sp and 40cp. His daily spells are – Zero: create water, detect poison, first aid, light; 1st: command, sanctuary.*)

Bertis (*He is a 1st level chaotic neutral human cleric. His vital stats are: HP 6, AC 12. His primes are Str, Wis, Chr. His attributes are Str 15, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 15, Chr 10. He carries padded armor, shield, mace, 10gp, 46sp and 92cp. His daily spells are – Zero: detect law, detect poison, purify food and drink; 1st: cure light wounds, protection from law.*)

Maik Felder (*His is a 3rd level chaotic neutral human cleric. His vital stats are: HP 14, AC 16. His primes are Int, Wis, Chr. His attributes are Str 14, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 16, Chr 13. He carries ringmail, large shield, footman's flail, 6gp, 13sp and 24cp. His daily spells are – Zero: detect magic, endure elements, first aid, light; 1st: bless, bless water, shield of faith; 2nd: aid, augury.*)

**Area 4: The Oak Grove and Shrine** Off the town square is a wide and shallow sloping hill upon the top of which is a tremen-

dous oak. The ground about the base of the hill is well worn and dusty from many years of use during festivals and markets. The upper portion of the hill is covered in thick and verdant green grass and flowers, all year round, despite any weather. The oak is likewise festooned with bright green leaves year round.

The Great Oak is a holy place where many come to offer worship to the deities of the sun, moon and harvest. There is no cleric or druid which watches over the tree, but many travel to Botkinburg to worship here. The Great Oak is covered in many glyphs that have been seared into its bark. They were placed there by the servants of Mordius, the Lady of the Forests, many centuries ago when the tree acted as a receptacle for the deity's will.

The tree itself is sentient and capable of movement and action, though it has not moved in well over two centuries. No one in Botkinburg is aware of this but the fey who live in the surrounding wood are, and when occasion permits, come to the tree and lay offerings at its roots. The tree does not react, or come to life, unless attacked.

Treant (*Their vital stats are: HD 9d10, AC 20, neutral. Their prime attributes are physical. They attack with tendril-like branches, grappling for 2d8 points of damage. They can conduct four such attacks per round. This treant has a permanent protection from evil spell cast on it and can regenerate 3 hp a round.*)

**Area 5: Tinker's Caravan** The area at the base of the hill on the Oak Grove is used as the town market or gathering place for festivals. There are three wagons drawn up and several families of tinkers here now. They travel far and wide through the region and collect and sell all manner of items. For any item requested which costs less than 25gp, there is a 50% chance it is in their supplies. There is approximately 1000gp worth of material in the wagons. For items over 25gp there is a 10% they will have it.

There are three women, five men and four children in this group including the two recently married who are staying in the Bent Hook. The tinkers are led by the wily Garfeld, an experienced tradesman with a good eye for a deal and a steal.

Garfeld (*He is a 4th level chaotic neutral human rogue. His vital stats are: HP 15, AC 14. His primes are Dex, Int, Chr. His attributes are Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Chr 14. He carries +2 leather armor and a +1 short sword.*)

**Area 6: House of D'Amter** This is the home of Lars and Gisela Haffner, devotees to the deity of healing and curing. They live in a large single story wood framed house with an attached barn. Above the front door is a lintel with a carving of an owl and an inscription on it, 'With my hands, I bring life.' A small smokehouse is located in their backyard along with several milk cows. Their dog, a large white mastiff, lingers in front of the house and barks loudly when anyone approaches.

Lars is an older man, stooped and bent with a long white beard and skin wrinkled and cracked with age. He is a cleric but has devoted his entire life to healing and has never laid a hand on anyone in violence and does not intend to do so. His wife, Gisela, is an accomplished herbalist and knows much about curing the ill and wounded, and helps Lars in his duties. Their services are ostensibly free. Yet, there is an understanding between those in the community and the Haffner's. They are 'paid' in service or offered 'gifts' of food. Further, whenever the Haffners need something, generally all they have to do is ask for it and they receive

it. Though not greedy, Lars and Gisela do expect some compensation and, from more powerful individuals, they expect service of some kind. He is not afraid to mention his need for rare herbs, animal parts or similar items. One object of particular interest to him is the feather of an oslen owl, a rare species of fowl who lived in the Barren Wood ages ago. Upon acquiring this feather, Lars gains one point of wisdom as a gift from the deity of healing.

The Haffners have acquired some wealth through the years. In a jar in their attic they have 12pp, 67gp, 156 sp and in their bedroom they have 13sp and 211cp. Also, in their basement they have numerous herbs and some medical equipment that healers and rangers might find useful. They are willing to sell or trade them.

Lars Haffner (*He is a 2nd level lawful good human cleric. His vital stats are: HP 7, AC 11. His primes are Int, Wis, Chr. His abilities are Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Chr 16. He carries padded armor, a war hammer, 2pp and 4gp. His daily spells are - Zero: create water, detect poison, first aid x 2; 1st: cure light wounds x 2.*)

**Area 7: Butcher** Tirten Shodfoot is the only dwarf of permanent residence in Botkinburg. Long ostracized from his kin in the Aneer'rafe Hills for theft, he came to Botkinburg to avoid contact with other dwarves. In this, he has been fairly successful. He took up butchery. He is of very ill temperament, treating other dwarves especially poorly but performs his tasks dutifully and with great professionalism yet with grumbles and complaints all the while.

Tirten seeks to redeem himself at this point in his life but sees little opportunity to do so in this remote and 'honorless' land. The arrival of the characters is viewed as a potential boon to Tirten as they may offer an opportunity for him to travel and face down many a foe. If the party appears to be honorable rather than greedy, he may offer his service to them.

Tirten (*He is a 3rd level chaotic neutral dwarf barbarian. His vital stats are: HP 20, AC 17. His primes are Str and Con. His abilities are Str 15, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Chr 10. He carries a breast plate, shield, +1 battle axe, gloves of ogre strength that confers 18 strength when they are worn, 120gp and 300sp.*)

**Area 8: Two Story Farmhouse** This is the home of the Schuler's. Fritz and his wife Lisa live here with their six children, all of whom are under the age of 15. Fritz has a large two story, wood framed house and barn. The family lives on the upper floor with the lower floor acting as a barn. Fritz is an affable person but his wife is more like a shrew, constantly complaining about Fritz's laziness.

She is, to some degree, accurate in her assessment of Fritz. He works as little as possible, bartering away a great deal of beef every year to the Bent Hook in exchange for beer, which he drinks to excess. Lisa has long grown tired of her husband's indolent ways and has begun to think of doing away with him. To this affect, she visits the Witch of the Wood (see below) on occasion in an effort to purchase small amounts of poison, with which she can slowly kill her husband. Lisa has secreted away several coins over the years and hides it in a clay jug in the rafters of the lower floor of the house (48 cp, 22 el, 12 sp, 2gp).

**Area 9: Farm House** A dairy farmer lives here. He and his only son spend much time hunting for food while the wife spends most of her time tending to the few cows they have. Eggar and Meekal



know the woods west of Botkinburg fairly well and are somewhat familiar with the Blacktooth Ridge, though they rarely go that direction as 'there are more than just animals along that ridge, there are evil things a'flittin' about now.' The family has secreted away a little gold for hard times. They have 22gp, 72sp and 124cp in a sack beneath a loose plank in their house.

Meekal is bored with his life as a farmer and hunter and can easily be convinced to adventure along the Blacktooth Ridge. However, once he has had a taste of battle, he is likely to decide farming is the life for him unless convinced otherwise.

Meekal, Human (*His vital stats are: HD 1d4, AC 13, neutral good. His prime attribute is mental. He carries a hide jerkin, longbow and a dagger. Meekal can track as a 2nd level ranger.*)

**Area 10: Old Man Nester's** Nester is one of the few remaining inhabitants of Botkinburg who can remember when the town was first being settled. He is in his late 90s and usually sits on the front porch of his house whittling away at a stick. He is still spry enough to tend his chickens and gather some food but mostly his neighbors care for him, insuring he is well fed and has enough fire wood during the winter. If Nester is not on his front porch or in his house, he is likely at the Chancel praying, resting or chatting with Hermannus or at the Bent Hook drinking sludge.

Nester is an endless source of information about the region and its history. Though he often elaborates and creates tales, they are sprinkled with enough fact to make sitting with him worth any curious character's time. He can explain who the Horned One was and what he did, he knows of the Blacktooth Ridge and correctly points out that new arrivals are coming into the region. He is aware that fey live nearby and he always, without fail, leaves a little something on his stoop once a week for them. He warns others should do the same lest they attract the ire of the wee folk.

**Area 11: Sheriff** This is the office of the sheriff and jail. It is a small wooden structure with several cells along its backside. The current sheriff, Aaron von Bedering spends most of the day here but lives on the outskirts of the town. Should he ever need help in catching or watching wrongdoers, two of the militiamen, Weslin and Erhardt, accompany him. He is empowered to get more from militia members if need requires it.

The Botkins appoint a sheriff for Botkinburg who acts as their representative and has the authority to arrest and execute people he considers to have committed a crime. Traditionally, the sheriff sits on the council with the head of the chancel and a member of the Botkin family in order to determine someone's innocence or guilt. However, of late, Hermannus has been sending Bertis to act in his stead. It is rare that anything happens in the village of much import. Occasionally someone steals something or a fight breaks out but this is usually handled by those involved. Mostly the sheriff spends his time at the Bent Hook.

Erhardt, one of Aaron's helpers, is a member of a secretive order of woodsmen of holy lineage, the Guardians of the Tree. This group is devoted to hunting down and locating any remnants of the Horned One's agents. Erhardt is here because of persistent rumors of an ancient and rising evil along the Blacktooth Ridge. When occasion permits, he travels to the Blacktooth Ridge region trying to discover the nature of the threat now rising. He would be very interested in any information the characters may have on Blacktooth Ridge.

Aaron von Bedering (*He is a 2nd level chaotic neutral human fighter. His vital stats are: HP 12, AC 14. His primes are Str, Con, Int. His abilities are Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Chr 10. He carries a chain shirt, club, battle axe, small pouch with 4gp and 32sp.*)

Erhardt (*He is a 5th level neutral good human ranger. His vital stats are: HP 29, AC 18. His primes are Str, Dex, Wis. His abilities are Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Chr 10. He carries +3 studded leather, shortsword of slicing which gives the wielder a +2 to damage, clothing, 34gp and 67sp.*)

**Area 12: Farrier** Greden Merkmén hunts the entire range of the Hruesen River looking for beaver, fox or other animals whose hide brings a fair value in Ludensheim or Botkinburg. He is a quiet man and keeps to himself and as such, has earned the distrust of his neighbors and fellow townspeople. Greden shares some of his knowledge of the river and the Blacktooth Ridge if pressed or the characters manage to befriend him.

Greden is the only member of a society of River Wardens who have returned to the region in the past several decades. Sent here in search of the remnants of the Horned One's minions, they remain incognito to protect themselves as they are weak at the moment. Greden follows the characters once or twice into the forests near Botkinburg to determine what they are up to, but will not intercede on their behalf should they get in trouble. If the characters appear to be of good alignment and concerned about the depredations of evil creatures he might help them out by supplying them with information. Should a ranger of good alignment be amongst the characters Greden offers to train him or her.

Greden (*His is a 6th level chaotic good human ranger. His vital stats are: HP 39, AC 17. His primes are Str, Dex, Con. His abilities are Str 14, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Chr 10. He carries a +2 longsword, +2 leather, 2 potions of healing, shield, longbow, pack, hunting gear, 25gp, and has 15 gems worth 10-16gp each buried in his yard.*)

**Area 13: Blacksmith** Darmek Veldenman is a general purpose blacksmith and not highly trained in weapons making or armor repair. He has several longswords he made, but they are of such poor quality that they have a -1 damage modifier. He can do general repairs and maintenance on weapons and armor and only charges 10% the value of the item. He is capable of making all manner of other goods commonly found in farming communities though.

**Area 14: Woodsmen** This rambling house and series of sheds belong to six brothers who are carpenters and woodsmen. They are a jovial lot who drink too much and work too little. None of them farm and only exchange firewood, cut wood and services for food or other needs. They are often found at Ortolf's House of Sludge drinking long into the evening.

The Krieger brothers have on occasion gone deep into the woods east of the river in search of hidden temples, abandoned forts or anything else that may contain lost treasures hoping to make a life's living in one fell swoop. Having failed, all of the brothers are eager to hire on for ventures along the Blacktooth Ridge or elsewhere, though they agree to do so only if all six can go. They also require a significant share of the loot, should any be acquired.

The Brothers, Human (*Their vital stats are: HD 1d4, HP 2, 3, 3, 3, 4, 5, AC 12, neutral good. Their prime attributes are physical. They carry leather hauberk, woodsman axe and dagger.*)

**Area 15: Farmer** This family spends most of their time working the garden in the rear of their house and tending several milk cows. They have been here for several generations. The father is not fond of strangers and tries not to have dealings with them. His son and daughter both work in the Keep as cooks part of each day.

The head of the household, Mertin von Stock, had a rather nefarious past as a highwayman. In his youth, he robbed innumerable travelers and accumulated a hefty amount of loot before giving up that rather dangerous career. He settled in Botkinburg and married about 15 years ago and has managed to keep his identity a secret. His wife died after the birth of their second child. He is getting on in years and has only recently begun to hint as to his adventures as a youth. He would consider taking on and departing his skills to someone who shows the right amount of respect and interest in his abilities. Mertin keeps his remaining treasure buried under an old barrel in his barn (280 gp, 320sp) and his most valuable personal possessions locked in a chest at the foot of his bed.

Mertin von Stock (*He is a 5th level chaotic neutral human rogue. His vital stats are: HP 28, AC 13. His primes are Dex, Con, Int. His abilities are Str 10, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Chr 10. He carries leather armor, light crossbow, daggers, shortsword +2, ring of silent movement that imparts +2 to all move silent checks.*)

**Area 16: Farmer** This narrow two story building is home to a friendly and affable family of ten. Well fed, the Keller's have several dozen dairy cows. Much of their time is spent milking the cows and preparing cheeses which they sell locally and send to markets in larger cities once every three months. Lately the roads have become unsafe and journeys often postponed or abandoned. They have accumulated a small sum of coin kept in a jar on a rafter in the father's bedroom (22 gp, 76 sp, 321cp). They usually hire several people to travel with them to Ludensheim during the winter when the roads are rarely traveled, poorly guarded or intermittently patrolled.

**Area 17: Fisher** This fisherman lives with his two surviving daughters. He rarely fishes and spends most of his time at the bar drinking away his daughters' catch. The daughters, Gisella and Nina, are very familiar with the river and truly dislike their father. Gisella has decided to leave and go to live with the witch in the woods, with whom she is familiar. Nina is somewhat of a troublemaker in town and pilfers occasionally. This is usually reserved for travelers and visitors who drink too much at the House of Sludge. They have gathered a little sum of booty over the years and have hidden it in a clay jar in the outhouse (2pp, 31gp, 41sp, 67cp, brooch (30gp), 2x rings (20gp and 30 gp).

Gisella (*She is a 1st level chaotic neutral human cleric. Her vital stats are: HP 5, AC 11. Her primes are Str, Wis, Chr. Her abilities are Str 10, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Chr 14. She carries a wooden holy symbol, and a cudgel. Her daily spells are – Zero: detect poison, endure elements, light; 1st: command.*)

Nina (*She is a 2nd level neutral evil human rogue. Her vital stats are: HP 6, AC 16. Her primes are Dex, Int, Chr. Her abilities are Str 7, Dex 16, Con 8, Int 10, Wis 10, Chr 16. She carries a dagger and leather armor.*)

**Area 18: Fisherman** The house of Grunald Horfane hangs half-way into the water. He has a boat attached to his windowsill and spends most of his time on his front porch, the only part still out of the water. The house was built some time ago on the side of a steep hill on the banks of the Hruesen River. Over time it has slowly slid halfway into the water. Oblivious to the eventual collapse of his house, Grunald continues living here, often fishing from atop his roof.

Grunald has a secret. A neryad lives in the waters beneath his sinking house. She comes up through a hole in the floor and, on dark nights, spends time talking with Grunald. He has, of course, become enamored of this being and waits eagerly for her arrival every night. If the characters befriend Grunald, in time he may reveal the presence of the neryad and she may also find the party agreeable. If so, she can fairly well insure the characters safe travel up and down the Hruesen River.

Grunald, Human (*His vital stats are: HD 1d4, HP 4, chaotic neutral. His prime attribute is physical. He carries fishing spear and a ring of water breathing. He has 10gp in a jar in the water.*)

Neryad (*Her vital stats are HD 3d8, HP 19, AC 15, neutral. She is able to control the weather in her immediate environment, not more than 40' by 40'. She can, for instance keep the morning's mist from dissipating until late in the day. She possesses an uncanny beauty and there are hidden melodies in her voice that allows her to charm as per the charm spell three times per day. If threatened she lures her charmed victim into the water and throttles him.*)

**Area 19: Boat Ramp** This was once a wooden bridge, whose remnants jut out into the river about 15 feet. Many of the fishermen gather here in the morning and afternoon before and after fishing. They discuss the days catch, mend nets and sell fish.

## Bafler Hill, The Halfling Quarter

The halfling quarter of town, the burrows as the humans call it, is located on the north side of Botkinburg on the slope of a hill overlooking the Hruesen River. Halflings began moving into town several decades ago as rumor of its peaceful nature and distance from warring lords in the south made it sound ideal for comfortable and calm lives. They are successful farmers and sheep herders and have supplied Botkinburg with much needed skills in the few years they have been here.

The halflings are very diligent and work hard most of the time. They are very successful farmers and craftspeople, actually out-producing most of the human farmers and craftsmen in both quantity and quality. Although the halflings get along well with most members of the community, some humans are envious of the wealth the halflings brought with them and have accumulated, heaping scorn on them for their work habits. Some even say they use magic or are in cahoots with the fay in the region.

Though the halflings adhere to age old traditions of offering foods, wines and trinkets to the fay every week, few are in contact with any of the fairies that live in the Barren Wood. "A pie on the porch is better than a stye in the eye," they are wont to say. But their wealth comes not from magic, but rather from hard work.

The halfling community, through its extensive contacts with relatives from all over the region, are also much better informed about events outside of Botkinburg than are most others. They willingly

share this information and are not averse to using it to their advantage when trading and selling items of value.

The halflings usually worship at the Great Oak but occasionally the Chancel as well. They are not typically involved with town affairs though a good 10 members of the militia are halflings and in times of stress energetically offer their services to the Baron.

**Area 20: The Swilling Swan** The Swilling Swan is a small brew house and bar built into the side of Bafler Hill. It is almost exclusively frequented by the halflings in Botkinburg as it is built only to accommodate people of their size. However, some of the humans do gather outside at several tables to partake of the good halfling wines the brew master concocts.

This is usually a jovial place as the owner, Megarin Paracook does this for fun rather than a living. Having some experience at a winery, when Megarin arrived, he immediately started gathering local berries and set about making wines. All his wines are seasonal and he often runs short as he does not collect enough ingredients to make enough wine to last the season. When he does have the wine though, he sells it very cheaply and offers it for parties, gatherings and other social occasions.

Megarin lives nearby with a large family of nine. They spend much of the year tending their crops and raising sheep. Two of Megarin's children, Namel and Mose, are adventurous sorts and have traveled far and wide in the Barren Wood. They have been to Fromkin's Pass. Being curious sorts, these two brothers have also struck up a friendship with several pixies who wander the Barren Wood and who they meet occasionally to enjoy Megarin's wine or even help the pixies plan pranks and enact devilish, though never harmful, deeds upon Botkinburg's inhabitants.

*Namel (He is a 2nd level neutral halfling ranger. His vital stats are: HP 14, AC 14. His primes are Str, Dex. His abilities are Str 10, Dex 16, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Chr 16. He carries a short sword, sling and leather armor.)*

*Mose (He is a 3rd level neutral halfling rogue. His vital stats are: HP 12, AC 14. His primes are Dex, Con. His abilities are Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 10, Chr 10. He carries thieves tools, 2 daggers, shortbow, leather armor.)*

**Area 21: Carpenter** This is the home of the halfling Befren Needlemire, a carpenter by trade and farmer by necessity. Having come here several years ago expecting to set up shop and earn a living doing carpentry in what appeared to be a growing community, Befren quickly realized that his skills were not in great demand. He makes a passable living, but only by supplementing his income by farming. He and his two older sons are familiar with the construction of traditional halfling homes and quite eagerly look forward to building a new structure on Bafler Hill. His wife and four daughters mostly work around the house with the animals and in the fields.

Befren's youngest son, Millipen, is a curious sort who is desirous of travel though reluctant to actually manage it himself. He is well versed in the tales and traditions of the region as his father has seen to his education. He has become quite a decent speaker and storyteller, bedazzling those at both the Swilling Swan and the House of Sludge. If properly enticed, Millipen may be willing to go along on a 'grand adventure.'

*Millipen (He is a 1st level neutral good halfling bard. His vital stats are: HP 7, AC 13. His primes are Dex, Chr. His abilities are Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 10, Chr 15. He carries a dagger, shortbow and padded armor.)*

**Area 22: Farmer** Edward Hale raises a few cattle but mostly tends to a large variety of crops in an expansive garden. He has a family of 8 and lives in a two story wood framed farmhouse. Part of the first floor is reserved for a barn.

One of his sons, Jared "the Spleen" Hale, has become a near professional hunter and brings in game quite often to supplement his family's resources. He sells the excess at the Bent Hook and the Swilling Swan and during the summer at the Oak Grove. He knows the surrounding area fairly well and has stumbled upon a secluded well-head that he claims was guarded by a magical neryad. He named it the Fount of Hope, saying that waters could heal. He stumbled upon it many years ago but has not been able to retrace his steps to it.

**Area 23: Fisher** This halfling family lives in a small burrow located on top of the hill. Their home is warm and cozy, filled with old furniture and many rugs and carpets. Mrs. Mar Elden, "Mrs. Elden if you please," runs the household. Her husband drowned in the river some years ago, a happenstance she talks about constantly, particularly at the Swilling Swan where she spends a good deal of time tipping back mugs of brew. The whole family is a fairly gregarious bunch and eagerly gather for family feasts in which friends or new acquaintances are invited. They enjoy tales of high adventures and exciting escapades. The older of the children looks forward to some traveling and a life of adventure.

**Area 24: Farmer** Another of the halfling farm families in town and an exception to the general industriousness of that community. This man, Barstow Frizzyfoot, has many children and a large wife whom he calls "B.T." The name has taken over the years so that few but herself know her real name, and most everybody, including her children, call her "BT, or sometimes Betty". Barstow has never revealed what the initials stand for, though he is often found in the Swilling Swan drinking brew and laughing to himself, all the while muttering "B.T." over and again. They constantly bicker and fight about what a poor job one another does in raising the children and their screaming can be heard far down the banks of the river. For their part, the children run about the fields half dressed and poorly fed, rarely attended to. They are frequently in trouble with the town Elders for petty crimes such as theft and vandalism.

**Area 25: Farmer** This family of halfling woodsmen, the Shipps, live in a one story building near the other burrows. They spend much of their time in the woods cutting and hauling wood. They also have a sawmill near their house where they cut and prepare wood for sale and make barrels and boxes as well as furniture and other objects. Recently, one of the sons, Buckeye Shipp spotted some strange signs in the woods. "The Trees were bent back at the tops, as if something were looking through the high spots all about!" he'll exclaim. He fervently believes a giant or something is about.

## RUMORS

The following is a list of rumors and unusual events that the inhabitants of Botkinburg may know about. These should be used to spur the characters on to action or raise questions the answers to which involve intrigue or exploration of the surrounding area. Talk is currently dominated by the disappearance of the Molkin

twins and the recent raids by goblins on farmers and travelers. The Molkin twins were abducted a fortnight prior in the fields while tending cattle. Their mother is beside herself with grief.

- 1: 'Dose Ludensheimens want a war? We'll give 'em a war!'
- 2: 'Daemons is out at nights, watch you feed 'em well!'
- 3: 'Thase a witch in the woods and her familiars are here.'
- 4: 'Eatin' them halflang foods 'eel get ya killed.'
- 5: 'The Baron is goin' crazy and his son has poisoned him.'
- 6: 'Them pixies and nixies need their food, so don't forget!'
- 7: 'Someone here is giving the Redcaps some information.'
- 8: 'Them tinkers is thieves and scoundrels I tell yeh!'
- 9: 'The Blacktooth is home to evil sorcerers and the living dead.'
- 10: 'There's more gold there than in all the south kingdoms.'
- 11: 'I fear there is more afoot than thieving, ancient evil I says.'
- 12: 'I know one thing only, the Witch King is back.'

## Wilderness Areas

The region around Botkinburg is fraught with dangers and evil creatures as well as a few benign and even helpful ones. The following section contains a brief description of the Blacktooth Ridge, the Barren Woods and the Hruesen River valley. Three random encounter charts are supplied for encounters in those regions. Following this are descriptions of various places along the ridge or in the woods which the characters are likely to come across. Castle Keepers should give particular attention to 'Beneath the Moon' in which the fay who live around Botkinburg are described.

Those listed are by no means the limit of monsters or creatures inhabiting the region of the Blacktooth Ridge. The Castle Keeper is encouraged to expand upon the encounters as necessary and even add more encounters which might better fit the mood of their adventure or interests of the adventuring party.

**The Barren Woods:** This is an oak and birch forest extending from the Hruesen River in the east to the massive Ingeld Lake in the west. Its deeps have only recently been encroached upon with those settlements developing along the upper Hruesen River and far to the north of Botkinburg. Many creatures of ancient origin roam the deep woods as it was once a land belonging to the elves and fay and the Horned One never truly conquered the region. Other monsters, spawn of the Horned One, occasionally crawl forth from the holes where they have been hiding these many long years to take the lives of all they can. Of late, their numbers have increased and the danger of travel here has become great indeed.

**The Hruesen River Valley:** This river spills out of the Great Morass or Blasted Heath far to the east and lazily makes its way through plains and forests until it abuts the Blacktooth Ridge. It has many feeder streams along its width and breadth. Its course narrows and becomes tumultuous some fifty miles north of Botkinburg as it enters the rougher hilly lands of the region. After passing through this region it tumbles on south until it spills into Lake Elweth.

The river is plentiful with fish and offers a wealth of food to settlers, bears and others who depend upon them for food. But this also attracts fell creatures of all sorts and makes travel along the river perilous in those lower reaches far away from the settlements of man. Many a strange and ancient creature can be seen in its blue waters.

**The Blacktooth Ridge:** This ridge line stretches from the Plains of Atrothos in the east before breaking up in the rocky flats of the

Elenor Plains in the south. The Blacktooth Ridge is a rocky outcrop dotted with innumerable fracture caverns and deep natural caves on the western edge of the Plains of Atrothos. The escarpment above and to the east of the Blacktooth Ridge is forested with scruboak and evergreens, and littered with huge boulders – detritus of glacial contraction.

For ages beyond count, the caverns of the Blacktooth Ridge have long attracted orcs, ogres, goblins, giants and other even more evil and malignant creatures who prefer the dark depths to the open sun. After the coming of the Horned One, the Blacktooth Ridge became a significant source of creatures with which to people his armies. Eventually, guard posts, fortresses, treasuries and barracks were built in the caverns beneath the ridges and huge hosts of troops were housed here under the command of powerful lieutenants and captains. After his fall, many of these were abandoned and left uninhabited for many years. Now it boasts many renegade elements of that ancient and most foul evil as the ridge offers safe hiding and deep holes – easy defense from those who seek to kill them.

## Random Encounters

There are three wandering monster charts for use when the party ventures outside of Botkinburg. These encounters are not the only ones which can occur while the characters are traveling through the region. The Castle Keeper should feel free to develop other encounters, or augment the encounters below, to develop story arcs that are integral aspects of the adventure.

### Botkinburg

This chart details encounters that occur within 20 miles of Botkinburg. Check for encounters once during the day and twice at night. Roll a d10 and a 1 indicates an encounter. Then roll a d20 to determine the type.

d20	Encounter
1-3	Villagers (2-5) / herding animals, collecting wood etc.
4-7	Stray animal (1-3) / sheep, cow, horse or other
8	Remnants of a goblin or orc encampment
9	Mountain Lion (1) / tracking party, may attack
10	Wolves (4-12) / eating, tracking party, moving
11-15	Herd Animals / deer, elk, oxen, boar, or other
16-17	Fey (2-8) / traveling, see 'Beneath the Moon' below
18	Goblins (7-12) / spying, raiding, stealing cattle
19	Traveler / merchants, party, knights, soldiers, clerics
20	Bandit (2-8) / ambush, after a raid, encamped

### The Barren Wood

This chart details encounters that occur while traveling in the Barren Wood. Check for encounters twice during the day and twice at night. Roll a d10 and a 1 indicates an encounter. Then roll a d20 to determine the type.

d20	Encounter
1-2	Bandits (2-8) / ambush, after a raid, encamped
3-4	Goblins (7-12) / spying, raiding, stealing cattle
5	Lost traveler (1-3) / villager scared, hiding, fleeing
6	Mountain Lion (1) / tracking party, may attack
7-10	Herd Animals / deer, elk, oxen, boar, or other
11-12	Wolves (4-12) / eating, tracking party, moving
13	Giant Spiders (2-8) / nest area, with prey, moving
14	Brown Bear (1) / hunting food 1 in 10 with cubs
15-16	Fey (2-8) / traveling, see 'Beneath the Moon' below
17-18	Orcs (2-8) / raiding, scouting, lost, encamped, after fight
19-20	Ogre (1) / traveling, searching for home, raiding



### Blacktooth Ridge

This chart details encounters that occur along the region of the Blacktooth Ridge. Check for encounters twice during the day and three times at night. Roll a d10 and a 1 indicates an encounter. Then roll a d20 to determine the type.

d20	Encounter
1-2	Goblins (7-18) / spying, raiding, stealing cattle
3-5	Orcs (3-12) / raiding, scouting, lost, encamped
6	Bandits (3-12) / ambush, after a raid, encamped
7	Hyenas (4-16) / hunting, around carcass, sunning
8-9	Wild Boar (2-6) / rooting around, relaxing at mud hole
10-12	Stirges (1-3) / hunting, with prey, flying overhead
13-14	Ogre (1-2) / hunting, traveling, looking for a home
15	Wolves (3-18) / eating, tracking party, moving
16	Bear, large (1) / aggressive male or female with cub
17-20	Herd Animals / deer, elk, oxen, boar, or other

### Beneath the Moon

Numerous groups of fey live in the vicinity of Botkinburg. There are nixies, pixies and sprites of all makes and sizes. They have lived in the region since before the arrival of the Horned One and they remained throughout his reign, avoiding contact with any and all as fortune permitted. The recent arrival of humans and even elves has encouraged them to once again involve themselves in the affairs of the forest and with those of men.

For the most part, they are harmless and do not bother the inhabitants of Botkinburg. However, as they consider this area their ancestral land, they do expect some tiny compensation for allowing the humans and halflings use of it. It is 'understood' that every

household 'give' some offering of food, coin, clothing or other goods at least once a month. This is usually placed outside the house of the family making the offering so that it can be retrieved easily. These offerings are usually placed on stoops, window seals, at the Great Oak or one of the various shrines located on the outskirts of town. If a family or individuals do not participate on a fairly regular basis, then some slight ill may befall their property; a sick cow, burned crops, a leaky roof, spoiled food, dulled hoes or weapons, etc.

The fey are generally not violent nor predisposed towards scaring away the majority of the people in Botkinburg, though a few of the inhabitants are looked upon with a disdain bordering on dislike. Most of the fey tend to stay out of sight only rarely making appearances before others and then only to those they are well disposed toward. The only exception is when people travel far into the Barren Wood or up the Hruesen River. In this case, they are generally seeking to discover the whys and wherefores of the interlopers traveling into what they consider their home.

The fey are nomadic and rarely stay in one place or abode more than a month. They usually move into the boles of trees in the winter and live up in the branches during the summer. Finding their temporary abodes is an exceedingly difficult task that might take years of search and involve much travel and no one has ever heard of it happening. It is rumored that they do have a communal gathering place deep in the Barren Wood and it is here the Faerie Queen lives.

2-16 Pixies/Sprites (*Their vital stats are HD 1d6, AC 16, chaotic neutral. Their prime attributes are mental. They attack by weapon doing 1d2 points of damage. Once per day they can become invisible. They can also cast command twice a day and ghost sound three times a day. They carry a dagger or 2-5 darts and 2-20gp.*)

2-16 Nixies (*Their vital stats are HD 1d6, AC 16, chaotic neutral. Their prime attributes are mental. They attack by weapon doing 1d2 points of damage. Twice per day they can become invisible. They can also cast, as the spell, faerie fire 2 times daily, and good-berry 3 times daily. They carry a dagger or spear and 2-20gp.*)

### Fromkin's Pass

Here, the Hruesen River bends slightly away from the base of the ridge and spreads out in rocky shallows. A large stone bridge arches over the entire length of the Hruesen River and was so solidly built in ages past that it has withstood the ravages of man, nature and time.

Fromkin's Pass is the location of the only remaining bridge that crosses the Hruesen River to the escarpment above the Blacktooth Ridge. It is a blocky utilitarian bridge, broad enough for two wagons to pass abreast. Along both sides are low stone rails. The stone is worn smooth from uncountable thousands of footsteps and wagon wheel groves, from years of wear, scar the center of the bridge. Statues once adorned each corner of the bridge. All but one have long since been destroyed. At the east end of the bridge is a broken and cracked statue of a large predatory bird perched atop a helmet. The giant beak and malicious eyes are stretched to the heavens as if looking for direction.

The bridge connects with a timeworn, paved path on the ridge line side. This is Fromkin's Pass. The path is broad and wide and created in such a manner as to allow wagon traffic and so angles up the ridge in several switchbacks. At each turn in the path is a

small, stone, one roomed building which once housed soldiers of the Horned One. As the path nears the summit of the ridge, the top of a large crumbling tower can be seen - Fromkin's Aerie as it is locally known.

This ruined tower once had a wall and several buildings surrounding it, though all have fallen into rubble now. The tower itself has only a little of the internal and external structure left. It is entirely hollow and one section of it is completely collapsed revealing gutted and burned insides. Except for the upper floor of the tower, only a few old and rotted beams remain. Nearly half of the uppermost floor remains while a portion of the staircase clings precariously to the wall of the tower. The ground about the tower is littered with small carcasses and bones and the decayed remains of animals.

Nothing lives in or around the tower except some stirges. The stirges sometime bring back small game for the young to suck on and the bones drop from the nest above to collect at the base of the tower. The stirges nest in the decayed walls and rubble of the upper reaches of the tower. There are 15 stirges nesting in the tower, though at any given time 3-12 of them are gone. All of the nests are located on the wall while the remaining floor is used as a feeding area. There are several animal carcasses here as well as a kobold carcass. Unless really hungry, the stirges do not attack prey as large as a human. However, should a halfling, gnome or dwarf make themselves easy targets or stand out alone, the stirges may consider them prey. Should anyone attempt to climb the tower or threaten the stirges nesting area, they do attack.

If much weight is placed on the upper floor, there is a chance it will collapse. Roll a d20. For every 10 lbs above 100 lbs of weight on the upper floor add 1 to the die roll (120 lbs is +2, etc.). If the result is 20 or higher, the floor collapses. It is a 30 foot fall to ground. Damage from the fall is 6d6. A successful dexterity saving throw halves the damage. If the saving throw succeeds by more than 10, no damage is taken as the character has grabbed a beam and not fallen. Though that character now hangs in mid air above the ground while the stirges gather.

Much like crows, stirges collect small baubles that are shiny. There are several pieces of treasure in the nests and should the time be spent searching, 13gp, 43sp, a brooch (10gp), ring (5gp), and an ivory statuette of Wenefar, goddess of the fay (50gp) are found. The statuette is valuable to many fay and should it be returned to them, no matter their alignment, the giver receives a single favor, within reason and capability.

12 Stirges (*Their vital stats are HD 1d10, AC 14, neutral. Their primary attributes are physical. They have bite attacks that inflict 1-3 points of damage. If they successfully bite an opponent they can drain blood for an extra 1d4 points of damage a round.*)

## Kruggle's Lair

Kruggle's lair is nothing more than an ancient guard post once used for keeping watch on traffic moving up and down the Hruesen River. It is located on the east cliff face overlooking the Hruesen River and on the Blacktooth Ridge. It is only accessible through a secret tunnel above it or by climbing to it from the river's edge. Even when occupied by troops of the Horned One, it consisted of little more than a few rooms for quartering troops, store rooms, a mess and a 'watch ring' (described below). Currently, the only resident is an aged and crotchety ogre, Kruggle, who has managed to survive the length and width of several centuries through luck, some wit and a strong right arm.

Kruggle occasionally raids farms in Botkinburg and other nearby communities in order to gather food when stores run low or when little game can be found. He eats rabbit and deer for the most part but prefers pig. This preference brings him into close contact with Botkinburg's inhabitants. Though not itching for a fight and more than willing to bargain his way out of a confrontation when faced by superior numbers, if he feels threatened or believes he can beat the party in a fight, he attacks and fights aggressively. His only other habit is an irrepressible desire to capture goblins and threaten to cook them and eat them. Being of small mind and not to keen on details, he often mistakes halflings and gnomes for fatter plumper goblins and under no circumstances would actually eat them (the goblins) as they are too stringy, but fat hobbits???

**Area 1: Entrance** On top of the ridge, amongst the bramble and massive cottage size boulders is one boulder with an illusory portal in it. There is a trail leading near it that is easily discernable to anyone familiar with the forest. A successful tracking check allows the trail to be followed to the rock, where the trail abruptly ends at the foot of what appears to be a cottage sized boulder.

The bolder face is in fact an illusion disguising the entrance and stairs that lead down into Kruggle's lair. A successful wisdom check (at +4) reveals vague inconsistencies in the face of the boulder. However, disbelieving in the illusion does not remove the illusion. A successful tracking check can reveal the ogres footprints, otherwise it takes between 1-10 hours of searching before anyone has the chance of noting the illusory portal (elves, dwarves and others with detect secret doors or similar abilities can attempt to detect it with a +4 to the check). All this is negated of course if someone leans on the boulder, as they fall right through.

If discovered, one can simply walk through the portal and enter a corridor several paces long and wide with an old wooden door at the far end of it. The door is barred from the other side and must be broken through to get beyond (the door has an armor class equivalent of 10 and 30 hit points). The racket created when breaking through the door has a chance of alerting Kruggle. If entered during the day, Kruggle is asleep and there is only a 3 in 10 chance he awakens with the breaking of the door. If entry occurs between dusk or dawn (or the party is in the lair at that time), Kruggle is awake and is alerted on a 7 in 10 chance. If alerted, Kruggle arms his trap and starts looking for the intruders.

**Area 2: Staircase** A broad, winding, stone staircase covered in twigs, leaves, rat droppings and other refuse descends into a darkness rank with the smell of overcooked meats, excrement and the pungent eye-tearing aroma of a slaughterhouse in summer. The stairs are slippery, worn smooth and covered in moss and the drippings of recently killed animals or other creatures. Each person descending the steps must make a dexterity check or slip and fall. No damage is taken, though the noise of the fall has a 4 in 10 chance of alerting Kruggle if not already aware of the interlopers. Items carried may also be dropped (dexterity check at -2).

**Area 3: Hallway** This broad and dank hallway is littered with debris and detritus. The south end of the hallway is particularly rank. Here, heavy silken bags like moth cocoons, are woven to the walls and ceiling and hang from the rafters. Literally thousands of beetles, spiders, roaches and other vermin are crawling around. The corpse wyrms (Area 9) drag their food here to store it by binding it in the silken residue and cocoons.

**Areas 4-8: Barracks** These rooms once housed soldiers in the army of the Horned One. They are now completely empty except

for some bits of debris like armor remnants, broken weapons, a few pieces of wood and other detritus. Kruggle does not use them. None of the doors are locked and all stand slightly ajar.

**Area 9: Barrack** This is the nesting area for the corpse wyrms. These foul looking wyrms are much like centipedes in appearance, with many legs on their segmented bodies and two hand-like claws. They have gathered here and built a huge gelatinous hive where they have placed hundreds of larvae. The corpse wyrms are almost always in here and only await Kruggle's offerings in the hallway to come out. The door is open and a putrid, rank smell spills out of the room like heat from a forge. The corpse wyrms attack as soon as anyone enters the room.

There are a few interesting items in the nest if the characters look for it. While building the nest, bones and wood from around the lair were used for support. With 1-3 hours of searching, in addition to a lot of worthless junk, the following items of value are located: large belt with little slot pouches containing 20pp, 3 rings (10gp, 40gp, 45 gp), fifteen crossbow bolts (deliver +1 damage, non-magical just well made with barbs), small helmet with diadem atop (120gp).

6 Corpse Wyrms (*Their vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 13, neutral. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack with two grasping claws located near the head of their many legged and segmented body. A successful attack can cause paralysis. The victim must make a save or be paralyzed for 3d10 rounds. Corpse Wyrms are able to bind their motionless prey in a cocoon of thin gossamer silk. Once bound a victim cannot break free unless they make a successful strength attribute check.*)

**Area 10: Portal** If Kruggle is alerted to the interlopers presence, he sets a trap on this door, otherwise it is as a normal door. He traps the door by removing the beam beneath the lintel. This beam currently prevents the stone above the door from collapsing. Kruggle shuts the door halfway, such that the weight of the stone rests on the door. If the door is opened any further, the lintel collapses onto those within 5 feet of the door (dexterity check, challenge level +1, damage 1d6, save for half damage).

**Area 11: Watch Ring** This is a very large room, the watch ring for the troops of the Horned One. Light spills into the room from six narrow windows located along the west wall (unless it is night). The room has a large open pit in its middle where many a large fire has been lit. The room is otherwise piled with debris: large pieces of wood, piles of hides, a huge pile of bones picked clean, and the equipment of the numerous kobolds, goblins, humans and halflings Kruggle has snatched over the years. There are caps, robes, pants, belts, boots, helmets, leather jerkins, shields, small swords, knives and other junk in abundance. Most are in a very poor state of repair.

If he has been alerted, Kruggle is in here, otherwise he is in Area 13 still asleep or just rousing. Kruggle sizes up the party before deciding whether or not to attack. If he thinks he can overtake the group, he attacks by throwing several small boulders and then rushes in with his broad bladed, double bitted axe. If he believes the party to be more powerful than him, he may try talking to them, asking them "Wut be it uh, wyy yuze sturbin me rest?" He does this in order to avoid a confrontation, give himself time to escape or to catch the party unawares and then attack. If Kruggle believes he is going to be killed or overtaken he makes a break for it and charges down one of the hallways, runs up the stairs and out into the wilderness.

**Area 12: Prison** The door to this room has three large cut stones stacked in front of it, each weighing over 100 pounds. Kruggle has blocked the door, keeping it shut, making a prison of the room. Kruggle has taken several prisoners over the past few months. Two kobolds and one halfling are all that remain. Kruggle makes no distinction amongst his prisoners. He threatens to cook them all the time, keeping them in a state of terror. Needless to say, the prisoners are a bit on edge.

The room they are kept in is large, dank and nasty. There is little in it but for the three hapless prisoners and the rotting corpses of their one time cell mates. Each prisoner has one hand in a manacle that is hooked to the wall. The manacles are locked but not through the use of any key, rather ingeniously for an ogre (ogres can be ingenious when put to the task of binding their prey), Kruggle has twisted large iron nails into the manacle's links, binding them as well as any lock, thus prevented any locks from being picked.

The halfling, Waddo Brikker, is from Ludensheim and was on his way to Botkinburg with a group of traders when they were set upon by a band of unger and orcs. He escaped into the woods only to be picked up by Kruggle. His family owns an Inn in Ludensheim, and will be grateful for his return. If the party does return Waddo, they are awarded 100gp and many free nights room and board (if they keep their manners about them).

**Area 13: Bed and Breakfast** This is Kruggle's lair. It is a simple room once used by the captain of the watch. This is where Kruggle keeps all his finery. There are piles of furs and cloth that he enjoys sleeping on, a large bronze platter he eats off of (likening himself to a lord), a brazier which is usually lit, some special bones (femurs from large bovine, used when hunting), a gigantic round shield (This belonged to a cloud giant before Kruggle made off with it. The giant's name is carved on the front of it, Sarvas Barzikos Noblis Adaluisian Fortudnous Appalateon, and, as it is a family heirloom, the giant would be grateful for its return.), and Kruggle's prized procession, a chest of treasures.

The chest is locked with an old padlock that is rusted and difficult to pick. The chest can be broken open easily or unlocked (challenge level +2). Inside are 500 large copper coins (about one inch to a side), square in shape and each equivalent to 3 copper coins currently (these are old imperial coins), 100 silver pieces (a dozen of modern make and the rest imperial), 20 gold coins (of modern mint) in a small box, three statuettes of gods, all made of silver (120gp, 60gp, and 20gp), a jeweled scabbard for a longsword (100gp) and about a dozen sheaves of paper. One of the sheaves of paper is actually a map of the region. It shows the location of various forts and one or another points of interest. Botkinburg is not on the map but the Vargolg is (below).

**Area 14: Escape Route** The far wall of this chamber has a secret door Kruggle has never located. It opens onto a small corridor with steps leading down. These steps end on a dark landing with another secret door beyond which can be heard rushing water. It opens onto a bank of the Hruesen River which is densely packed with shrubs and thorny bushes.

Kruggle, Ogre (*His vital stats are HD 4d10, HP 31, AC 15, neutral evil. He attacks by weapon doing 2d6 points of damage. With a successful hit he gets an overbear attack as part of that attack.*)

## The Bubbling Cauldron

This is an ancient area of the Barren Wood crowded by aged and gnarled oaks with twisting roots and heavy boughs that have never felt the bite of an axe nor the gnawing of saws. The trees stretch tall and spread at their tops, forming a dark and leafy canopy in spring and summer and an airy and tangled web of branches in winter. The lower reaches of the wood are covered in thorny undergrowth with the brown husks of long dead trees covering the ground.

Snaking amongst the undergrowth is a trail that is difficult to locate. The trail is mostly used by deer, boar and small horned bovine but is also used by the occasional traveler seeking knowledge, aid or divination from the witch who lives at its end. This trail can be found by a person well versed in woodland lore. A tracking check can be made at a -3 to discern its unique nature. If successful, faint human and boot tracks are noted.

Following the trail is a six day trek through the wood to the hovel in which the witch lives. Each day a tracking check must be made (no modifiers) and if successful, the trail is located and is easily followed. A failure on the tracking check indicates the characters are lost and must begin searching for the trail again. One check is made each day at an extra -1 penalty (cumulative) until the trail is located (for example, after losing the trail twice, a -5 tracking check is made). This continues until the characters find the hovel or give up trying.

In a dark patch of the Barren Wood, beneath a tangle of massive branches and amongst entwining roots is a hovel made of thorn brush and dried bramble piled and tied together. In front of the hovel, on a bare patch of earth, is a large black iron cauldron sitting over a fire of blue flame. Large belching green bubbles froth and steam at its surface emitting a pungent odor like a charnel house.

Neegle the Witch, lives here. Though called a witch by the locals she's much more. Neegle is an ancient creature, a Fraonoth, or what the dwarves call the Taonu Gorth, those who came before the beginning. They are ancient creatures who stole into the world from the Void. Some of the Fraonoth are powerful creatures and Neegle is one of them. Neegle's particular gifts are that of divination and immortality. She can see into 'a' future. Not necessarily the one that will unfold, but one that may unfold. She has lived here for ages beyond count and hid herself away with the coming of the Horned One. Few know of her presence and those that do either consider her an evil that needs exterminating or an oracle deserving reverence. Neegle is wary of strangers and often hides when others approach. If the visitors do not appear to want to harm her, Neegle makes herself known to them and agrees to divine their future should anyone want to know it (see casting the bones below).

Neegle lives with Gunald, a stunted dwarf of ancient lineage. Gunald is malformed with a giant tumor on his back and a club foot. Neegle took the dwarf in aeons ago after he was tortured in the dungeons of the Horned One, escaping during the Trench Wars. He has lived here ever since and is a loyal servant of Neegle's. The dwarf usually approaches strangers before Neegle ever comes out. Occasionally there are sprites in the vicinity of the witch's lair. These sprites are Neegle's friends and they too will aid her in a fight if one proves necessary.

Neegle, being of that age before the coming of man and elf, carries with her the taint of the world's founding. Though she

is immortal, should she ever kill any of the children of the All Father, she will lose her immortality and powers. As such, Neegle makes every effort to avoid harming others or fighting and willingly abandons her hovel to do so, teleporting Gunald away with her.

Neegle also makes potions and herb pouches that many may find useful and she is willing to trade them for goods or services, though never gold, gems or mundane treasures which will never do her any good. She can create healing potions or salves, gathers herbs to counteract poisons and help with diseases and other common ailments. The vast majority of her spells are utilitarian in nature or have to do with augury. Her special ability is 'casting the bones.'

With this ability, in which she literally casts bones from a pouch onto the ground, she can auger 'a' future for the recipient once a day. The auguring process is automatic. The prediction is vague with (the Castle Keeper never knowing what a player may do) descriptions such as, 'You will find yourself in a dark place with many enemies surrounding you intent upon your death,' should suffice. The prediction can be used to point the players in a particular direction or give them a piece of information they would otherwise not be able to acquire. Finally, should the characters convince her to cast the bones, the player for whom she augers a future should be allowed to add a +5 to any check, attack or saving throw which might be appropriate. Such an instance may be in which the Neegle informs a character that a great axe will fall upon their head. Then when in battle with Kruggle or some orcs, that character should have a déjà vu moment and receive a bonus in combat or a saving throw.

Also, if the characters evince an interest in the Vargolg, Neegle perks up as she is also concerned with the Vargolg. Though she does not know its location she will offer a divining stone to the party in exchange for 'bringing me the eye of serpent.' Something for which she offers no more explanation. The stone is a black rock that just grows hotter until the character divining it locates the door to the Vargolg at which point it turns cold.

Neegle, Fraonoth (*Her vital stats are HD 10d8, HP 50, AC 22, neutral. Her primary attributes are mental. She has innate spell ability and can cast the following spells three times a day: all cleric and druid of 1st-5th level and 3 spells of each 6t h-9th. She can become invisible at will and teleport once per day at will. She carries a magical bag of bones and a staff.*)

Gunald (*He is a 4th level chaotic neutral dwarf rogue. His vital stats are: HP 16, AC 19. His primes are Con and Dex. His abilities are Str 10, Dex 17, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Chr 10. He carries a +4 leather armor, +1 ring of protection, +3 short sword and a cloak of elvenkind.*)

Sprites 4-12 (*hp 1d6; ac 16; prime mental; atk 1; dmg 1d2; special: invisibility x1 day, command x2 day, ghost sound x3 day; eqp: dagger, 2-20gp.*)

4-12 Sprites (*see above, page 12.*)

Bag of Bones: This is a bag of small bones from a long dead owl who once was a pet to the deity of foresight. Using the Bag of Bones to tell the future requires a cleric of at least 5th level. Simply throwing the bones on the ground and intoning the name of the deity allows for the augury. However, the bones must be read and learning to read them can take a lifetime. To do so, the



character must find a 10th level cleric devoted to the deity of foresight and study under that cleric for at least a year to learn the script carved on the bones. The augury works as described above with each five years of study conferring a +1 to the appropriate dice roll to a maximum of +3. The bones can be sold but some would just as well kill to get the bones as pay for them.

## Fountain of Hope

In this glade is a large fountain carved from the bole of an ancient tree. Water bubbles from the bole and slowly spills onto the ground. The area is soggy and moss ridden with many large ferns and leafy plants growing in great abundance all around it. A dryad, Nymania, lives nearby in an ancient oak that stretches 80 feet into the sky. She keeps an eye on the fountain and ensures, to the best of her ability, that no harm comes to it. Nymania has an aid in this endeavor, Fertermen Gidner, a druid who was long ago ensnared by the dryad's charms.

Fertermen tends to the tree and the fountain. He is a wary fellow and immediately distrustful of any arrivals. He approaches anyone who does not appear outwardly hostile and asks their business. Of course, Fertermen is not concerned in the least about anyone's business but simply makes small talk before trying to usher anyone away. If the characters seem benign, Fertermen allows them to drink of the fountain but warns them, those ill at heart or even those too pure at heart may suffer dire consequences.

For those of lawful good alignment, the fountain offers refreshment and nourishes the body to a point well beyond satiation. It is as if they have just eaten three days worth of food and are rendered immobile for 24 hours. For those of chaotic evil alignment, drinking from the fountain fills them with a ravenous hunger forcing them to eat three days worth of food in one day or be unable to perform any tasks, being severely famished. If they eat three days worth of food, they are rendered immobile for 24 hours. For characters of any other alignment, drinking from the fountain heals 1d4 hit points and fulfills thirst and food needs for three days.

The dryad has tired of the druid and seeks to rid herself of his company. If any of the characters have a charisma score of 17 or 18, she attempts to charm them, releasing the druid from his charm.

*Dryad (Her vital stats are HD 2d8, HP 14, AC 17, neutral. Her primary attribute is mental. The dryad is a powerful fey with a beauty such that it creates a magical dweamor around her that makes her appealing to almost living creature. She is able to take advantage of this and charm a victim once per day. She carries a gown of radiance that increases her charisma score by two points, a ring of shields with 10 charges that when activated places a magical shield around her giving her a bonus +3 AC for 4 rounds.)*

*Fertermen Gidner (He is a 3rd level chaotic neutral human druid. His vital stats are: HP 17, AC 13. His primes are Str, Con, Wis. His abilities are Str 15, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Chr 9. He carries a +1 sickle, +1 leather armor, +1 ring of spell resistance and 50gp brooch. He has no spells.)*

## Troll Bridge

Among the bramble and shrub of the Hruesen River is an old stone wharf once used as a staging post for troops of the Horned One. The wharf has collapsed and worn away with time and very

little of it is recognizable or even visible at this point. Beneath the wharf is a small series of rooms built by a gnarly river troll.

The area around the wharf is dense with undergrowth and bramble making the wharf itself difficult to see unless one is traveling along the river's bank or along the ridge line above it. An observant character might notice that the banks of the river have no tracks on them. This is very unusual since wild game often come to the river for refreshment. But, since the troll has a tendency to eat everything it can, the animals tend to stay away.

Though the troll usually eats his prey in the tunnels beneath the wharf, he occasionally sits upon a high rock nearby and devours whatever he has caught, tossing the remains into the river. The river is shallow near this rock and even a brief glance into it reveals a pile of bones and shreds of armor along with a few weapons in the sandy river bottom. Most of these remains are of animals, though a few human, dwarf and other remains can be located. In the sand are a few baubles and coins that the troll never noticed: 18gp, 42sp, 71cp, necklace (40gp), 3x rings (15gp, 20gp and 25gp), gold buckle (10gp), and a silver holy symbol (50gp)). The weapons and other accouterments have rusted so much so that they are not useful.

The troll lives in some tunnels it has built beneath the wharf. They are accessible through an entry in the river beside one of the footings. One must swim several dozen feet under the wharf before coming up in a corridor ten feet in height with four feet of water in it. Much of the rest of the complex is similarly flooded. There are four crudely hewn rooms dripping in mud and grime which stretch, one after another, deeper into the side of the bank. Each room is approximately 10 feet in diameter and piled high with the bones of prey.

The final room in the complex is above water level and is moderately dry, meaning there are only puddles on the floor. This is where the troll sleeps and keeps the goods he has pilfered over the years. Several swords, some armor and a few helmets as well as the tattered remains of clothing are piled up as a nest. The metal objects are rusted and useless except one short sword giving off a faint bluish glow. It is magical, delivers +2 damage to all evil creatures as well as emanating a five foot radius bluish glow in the dark. There are 80pp, 234gp, 450sp and 490cp in various places around the room, two silver brooches (20gp each), one ring (10gp) as well as a blessed holy symbol that confers a +1 to hit bonus on all creatures in a 20 foot radius if held by a cleric whose deity is a god of war (even the enemies of the one holding it).

The troll either spots the characters above ground or learns of their presence as soon as they enter his complex. The troll only fights if it believes it can win. Otherwise, it follows the party at night and tries to steal away the smallest member and bring him back to its lair, where it will be promptly eaten.

*Troll (His vital stats are HD 6d10, HP 45, AC 16, chaotic evil. They attack with 2 claws for a 1d4+4 points of damage each and a bite for 2d6 points of damage. If they strike with both claws they can rend for an extra 2d6 points of damage. Trolls can regenerate 4 hp per round.)*

## Beneath The Blacktooth Ridge

The Blacktooth Ridge is located far from Botkinburg and is home to several deep dungeons, ancient temples, vast barracks complexes and twisting caverns which offer much for adventurers and explorers. Locating these dungeons is often a difficult task as

many are well hidden from normal view and they must be searched for. Others are more easily located and visible to most. Travel along the banks of the Hruesen River and careful observation of tracks often reveal the location of hidden or concealed dungeons.

The innumerable dungeons and temples along this ridge-line are not described in this small sheaf of papers. Only one such place is described, the Vargolg, as it pertains most closely to the adventure at hand. The Castle Keeper is encouraged to create other dungeons and complexes for the characters to explore as this alone is unlikely to slake their thirst for adventure, fame and gold.

The Vargolg is located on the eastern banks of the Hruesen river up a narrow defile. Locating the Vargolg might take the players some time since it is so great a distance from Botkinburg and so few know of its location. However, many villagers have heard rumors of such caves and old forts along the Blacktooth Ridge so the players should be able to surmise that the lair of the Red Caps is located someplace along its length. Locating the exact one may prove a challenge.

There are several ways the characters can locate the dungeon: they can track a raiding party back to the Vargolg, they can travel down the Hruesen investigating all hidden caves and fortresses, they can look at the map provided in Kruggle's lair, negotiate with Nargulf or ask the witch for a divination. Each manner has its own hazards and difficulties as well as rewards.

**Tracking:** Locating the Vargolg by back-tracking the Red Caps is possible though difficult since the goblins are careful to cover their tracks. Any ranger tracking the goblins makes his checks at -1 with an additional -1 for each 24 hour period that passes between the start of tracking and locating the Vargolg or losing the trail.

**Kruggle's Map:** The map from Kruggle's Lair neglects to show the exact location of the Vargolg, offering only a vague idea of direction and that it lies along the base of the ridge. The most revealing clue given on the map is that the Vargolg is located up a defile and is held by a great double door.

**Hruesen River Exploration:** If the characters explore the Hruesen River, they are likely to find the Vargolg eventually. However, the nature of these explorations is such that missing the Vargolg is entirely possible. The characters are likely to spend a significant amount of time undertaking this and encounter a host of other problems and dungeons along the way.

**Divining Stone:** The witch offers the characters a divining stone. Should they chose to take this item, the characters can use it to divine the location of the Vargolg.

## The Vargolg

The Vargolg is an ancient underground complex once used as a secret storehouse and barracks for one of the Aufstrag's regiments. The complex was abandoned long before his demise and, except for an occasional wandering ogre and other maleficent creatures, sat unused for many ages. Recently, Rottenkip's band of goblins located the dungeon and decided to use it as one of



their many hideaways. Rottenkip and the majority of his troops rarely spend any time here as they are usually off on raids to the south or in one of their many other hideouts. However, he has left a trusted lieutenant, Marglerod, and some of his band to guard the treasures stored here as well as keeping the place ready for Rottenkip's return.

This complex is located in an area where the Hruesen River abuts the Blacktooth Ridge and is entirely underground. The entry is fairly difficult to locate as it was designed to be kept secret. The dungeon is divided into distinct upper and lower sections though the lower section is not really beneath the upper, just deeper in the ridge line.

The upper section functioned as a barracks for troops and contained armories, a smithy, storerooms, barracks, meeting halls, cooking halls and the like. Currently, the goblins and other members of Rottenkip's band reside here. The agent from Ludensheim

is also located in the upper section of the dungeon. He is being held here against his will while negotiations for his release are underway. The Molkin twins are also here.

The lower section is recessed in a deeper part of the complex. It is accessible from only one corridor. This section was never completely transformed into a functioning part of the upper complex as it was never seen as necessary. However, it was used for burials, secret rituals and a treasury. There remain many strange things in the lower section. So strange and frightening that Marglerod and his retinue rarely make trips down into it. It is abandoned except for the ghost naga that resides there as a guardian to the treasuries. Entering the lower portion awakens the ghost naga who proceeds to hunt for the interlopers.

## Upper Section

**Area 1: Entry** The main entry to the Vargolg is located on the north side of the Hruesen River down and inside a long and narrow cleft in the ridge face. A great deal of brush and shrub grow in this cleft making it difficult to observe. However, any successful tracker easily locates tracks on the south side of the bank and might note that the Hruesen is very broad and shallow at this point. The river actually has a bunch of large cobbles built up down stream to spread the flow of the Hruesen making it about one foot in depth at this point. On the north side of the Hruesen, near the entry to the cleft are many easily discernable tracks.

Across the river and down the cleft is a narrow path hemmed in by shrubs and small trees. The cleft ranges from 10' to 20' in breadth while the path is only several feet wide. At the end of the path is a large stone portal with a tightly shut wooden door barring the way in. To the side of this door is a pile of rubble and stone that was once a door. Above the door, on the lintel is a series of timeworn runes and glyphs. Only someone versed in ancient tongues can recognize these runes. They are territorial markings and ownership glyphs. Uncommon in these days, in times of old, glyphs were used to designate ownership and name current leaders for territories. This one is particularly ominous since it states that what lies beyond belongs to the Lord of Ice and Snow and that the last ruler was named Gethgord, Servant of Mell. This door is not guarded. The door is broad, about 5' wide, swings inward and is open a little.

Should the rubble of the original doorway be examined, more ancient script can be discovered. After several hours, placing the pieces back together reveals the following to those who read the ancient script.

*Pass these portals, with empty grace  
Make solvent a pact, to that with no trace  
Or lay your life low, in this lonely place*

The poem is a riddle and warning to all who enter. This place was once guarded by greater and lesser devils who were instructed to attack all who entered. Those who fought back were killed, but those who did not fight, but stood passively by while the demons attacked them, were spared and allowed to enter the dungeon. The demons were forbidden to attack those who refused to defend themselves as these were often the troops or servants of the Horned One. Only one demon remains in the lower halls and still abides by this stricture.

Once the characters have entered and then left the Vargolg, there will be a guard positioned outside the doorway.

**Area 2: Guard Room** The door is easily opened but the hinges creek loudly as it does so. Beyond is a large room with a low slung ceiling. A table with several chairs around it is in the middle of the room. Leather tankards and meat scraps are piled on the table. A large open barrel sits nearby. On the floor is a fire ring with red coals in it and in another corner is a large brass brazier with a small fire burning in it. Across the room is another wide double door that is open. Noise comes from down the hall. There are large guffaws of laughter and yelling.

Several goblins are usually here guarding the entrance. However, they have moved down the hall to their sleeping quarters to gamble and drink. A small group of raiders has just returned from the south with some loot for entertainment and it is with these that the guards are gambling. If someone listens they can hear the guttural language of the goblins, followed by laughter and the clack-clacking of something small and light on the stone floor. If care is taken and someone speaks goblinoid, they can hear the goblins placing bets. The clacking noise is the dice being rolled and coin falling to the floor.

Every 5 rounds, there is a 1 in 6 chance that a goblin comes into this room from Area 3 to fill up a tankard of ale. If he arrives and has time, the goblin sounds the alarm and races back to Area 3 while others charge out to confront the intruders. If, for some reason the goblin is incapacitated, another comes to look for him in 1d12 rounds.

The second time the dungeon is entered, 3-5 (d3+2) guards will always be in this room.

**Area 3: Entry Hall** Peering through the doors reveals a large, broad hallway with four doors opening on to it. All the doors are open and light spills out of two of them. The hallway ends in a brightly lit chamber several lengths away from which is coming the noise of bleating sheep. Combined with the laughter of the goblins in Area 7, a cacophony of noise echoes through the hallway.

**Area 4 & 5:** The doors to these rooms are closed though not locked. They are filled with the trash and detritus the goblins have created over the past decade including broken crates and barrels, pilfered goods, rotted foodstuffs, and the leavings of innumerable goblins. The rooms stink and are crowded with beetles, roaches, rats and small spiders.

There are also roach worms who live in this mess. These are large roaches the size of small dogs but slender, round and bluish. They burrow deep in the mess and rest there until disturbed or hungry. They are aggressive and attack if the characters disturb the garbage.

8 Roach worms (*Their vital stats are HD 1d4, AC 12, neutral. Their primary attributes are physical. Their bite attack does 1d2 points of damage. A successful hit delivers a foul virus, that requires a constitution save at +4 or the victim suffers all constitution saves at -2 until cured or after 1-2 weeks of bed rest.*)

**Area 6: Front Barracks** Originally used for housing a large contingent of guards, this room has now been converted into a loot sorting room. As such, it is piled with a mish-mash of broken sundries and discarded junk from various caravans and houses that have been raided over the past few months. There are piles of clothing, a few broken crates of foodstuffs, one of nails, another

of metal ingots as well as several lanterns, some pitchforks and hoes. Most of the valuable or useful material has been moved down the hall to Area 8.

**Area 7: Barracks** Another barracks room. This one is in use though. The door to the room is open and light spills out of it. A group of goblins has just returned from successful raids to the south and are enjoying some of the loot. There are a dozen goblins in the room playing dice and drinking.

The room contains several dozen bedrolls where the goblins sleep. There is a large cooking pit in the middle of room high with flames licking a roach worm cooking on a spit. Two goblins are standing by the fire with long spears poking at the large worm and laughing all the while. A large open cask sits on the ground by the fire and pile of wooden cups beside pools of spilled wine and an empty overturned cask. All the other goblins are gathered at the far end of the room throwing dice, drinking and eating.

Only four of the goblins in the room have armor on, the others are only wearing tunics. None are anticipating any trouble so are startled at the arrival of the characters. There are weapons lying all about the room and it only takes the goblins 1-2 rounds to gather them up if attacked. As they goblins are not completely unused to having human visitors in the Vargolg, they do not respond aggressively to humans at first. On the other hand, should any elves or dwarves be present, a fight is to be had. A fight will alert the gnolls in Area 8, who will come to inspect.

8 Goblins (*Their vital stats are HD 1d6, AC 14, chaotic evil. Their primary attribute is physical. They attack by weapon. They carry boiled leather armor, short spear, 2d4 gp, 2d6 sp and 3d10cp.*)

**Area 8: The Long Hall** At one time this large hall accommodated wagons and other carts for unloading as well as the mustering of troops. Currently, the goblins use this room to store some of the loot they intend to keep or larger items for which they have no use. Usually the material in here is utilitarian while treasures and valuables are taken further into the dungeon.

The room is crowded with mundane loot. Currently there are three wagons in here, several donkeys, half a dozen sheep, crates and barrels and piles of ill gotten gains from numerous raids on caravans and other places to the south. There are also two wagons half torn apart, as they offer an easy source of firewood. Several large fires are burning in pits at either end of the room. Three broad passageways lead off from this room.

A massive gnoll is standing on one of the wagons rifling through a crate and casually tossing aside the stuff he finds. Another gnoll sits on the end of the wagon, focusing upon a small object in his hands (a small metal sundial). Both are wearing their armor and weapons, but their shields and spears are located near the entry. Upon seeing the party, they give off a war cry and charge them regardless of the odds. If they go investigate a battle in Area 7, they pick up their shields and two spears each on the way.

The metal sundial has a large "A" stamped on the back. It was part of a shipment of goods belonging to Aldadius in Botkinburg. He will be very pleased at its return and favorably disposed towards the characters from that point forward. The rest of his goods are located in the priest's chambers in Area 22.

2 Gnolls (*Their vital stats are: HD 2d8, HP 12, AC 17, chaotic evil. Their prime attributes is physical. They attack by weapon. They carry shield, scalemail, helmet, mace or battle axe, 4d6gp and 5d8 sp.*)

**Area 9: Kitchen** This room was once used as the kitchen for the troops that lived here, as high as six companies of orcs at one time. The kitchen is a large room with several storage areas attached to it. Although the number of Red Caps in here now does not approach the original garrison, the kitchen is still used to prepare meals, butcher pigs and goats and store food.

The room stretches a good spear throw across and is half that wide and is lit bright with the flames from a grill. There are four large round raised brick grilling areas in the center of the floor and stretching down the room. Metal rods are placed on either side of the grills and used as spits, one of which has a massive boar on it roasting over a bright flame. A goblin is slowly turning the spit and keeping a close eye on the boar. Nearby four more goblins are hefting a large black pot and trying to angle it onto the rods over another grill – they are planning on making a stew.

Along the north wall are various tables and shelves piled and scattered with pots and pans of all sizes and makes, plates, cups, dishes, bowls and flatware. One goblin is wandering along the tables and randomly kicking pieces off while quaffing brew from a tankard.

There are two lowered storerooms attached to the kitchen. Both are used for piling foodstuff in and butchering animals – or other creatures – for food. There is ample food in the larders including everything from potatoes to apples and salted fish to freshly butchered pig. The goblin chef is standing at the top of the steps to one of the storerooms and barking orders to three goblins below. He is carrying a huge butcher knife in one hand and large ladle in the other. He is telling the goblins what vegetables to get for the stew. The goblins are scurrying about and making a big pile of stew ingredients in the center of the storeroom.

None of the goblins in here are armed or armored except the chef. None are really willing to fight over food either and try to escape unless pressed, in which case they gather up pots and pans and fight back or beg for mercy. There is little of value in the room other than the food found in the larders.

8 Goblins (*Their vital stats are HD 1d6, AC 15, chaotic evil. Their primary attribute is physical.*)

Goblin Chef (*His vital stats are HD 1d8, HP 7, AC 14, chaotic evil. His primary attribute is physical. He carries a leather smock that acts as leather armor a cleaver and a butcher knife. He can fight two handed without penalty.*)

**Area 10: Major Barracks** Both hallways leading into this room are slanted downward somewhat, dropping about 4 feet from the the hallway leading into this area. This was once the major billeting area for the contingent of troops living here. The room is very large, with a vaulted ceiling and support columns running down its middle. It is currently the billeting area for the Red Caps. Luckily, there are only a few in residence. Before even approaching this room, loud raucous noise can be heard in the hallway. There is singing, yelling and all manner of racket coming from down the hallway.

The remains of the bunks can be seen around the room. Small metal cots hang from chains attached to the ceiling. Several of these are still intact and hold up to six cots, like bunk beds. Also, a metal throw ladder is attached to each cot system allowing one to climb to the top bunk. In all, there are dozens of intact cots hanging from the ceiling and hundreds of ruined ones piled on the floor. Several large fire pits burn throughout the room. There are also dozens of goblins in here lounging around, sleeping, singing and gambling.

A group (10 goblins) is gathered around a large fire in the north-east area of the room. They are swilling brew and singing some foul song so discordant as to give one a headache. Another group (6 goblins including the sub-Chief) in the southwest corner of the room are gambling with dice. Others (8) are wondering about, sleeping or just lounging. No guard is kept and other than daggers, the goblins are unprepared for any type of combat. If attacked it could take a couple of rounds for them to gather weapons and fight back. There is little of any value in this room. The loot generally goes to the stronger of the tribe and these most assuredly are not them.

22 Goblins (see above Area 7.)

Goblin sub-Chief (*His vital stats are HD 1d8, HP 8, AC 15, chaotic evil. His primary attribute is physical. He carries clothes, dagger, short bow, short sword, shield and a +1 battle axe. The axe is cursed so that anyone who picks it up cannot drop it unless a remove curse is cast from a 10th level or higher cleric.*)

**Area 11: Well** This was once the well for the troops billeted here. The goblins use it for water but they also use it as a refuse pit. Drinking from this well is ill conceived and will cause an illness in all humans and demi-humans leaving them sick for one week.

**Area 12: Storerooms** These rooms were once used as storerooms for weapons, tools and various other types of equipment needed by the troops stationed here. They have been searched and cleaned out of any useful material.

**Area 13: Workroom** At one time this was a workroom for making weapons, wagons or any other paraphernalia needed in the dungeon or for war. Several gnolls have taken up residence here. Though members of Red Caps, they do not like goblins and have become members more out of convenience rather than desire.

There are three gnolls in the room. They have recently returned from a raiding venture and are currently repairing their equipment. One is sitting by a fire slowly sharpening its sword. Another is trying on a chainmail shirt he stole and has refitted. The final one is snoring loudly, tucked up in his bedroll. Other than three bedrolls, the fire pit and a large trunk, the room is nearly empty (gnolls being of rather Spartan and militaristic nature detest goblin clutter). If attacked they fight back ferociously grabbing weapons and shields from nearby.

The trunk contains some of the gnoll's loot. It is locked but easily picked (+2 to check). Inside are two silver candle sticks and a snuffer, three silver plates and silverware (20gp total), five rings (1-10gp each), a badly chipped black statuette of the Horned One (100gp to collector) and a small gold mouthpiece to a musical instrument (powerful magic emanates from this, 25gp. There are also coins of various makes. There are 48gp, 135sp and 220cp.

3 Gnolls (*Their vital stats are HD 2d8, AC 17, chaotic evil. Their primary attribute is physical. They attack by weapon. They carry shield, scalemail, helmet, mace or battle axe, 4d6gp and 5d8 sp.*)

**Area 14: Smithy** This was once the smithy. It is occupied by three very large ogres. They happen to be away to the south with the Red Caps at the moment. They work well with the gnolls who make sure no one messes with the room while they are away.

There is a large fire pit and furnace in the center of the room, obviously the remains of a smith's forge. It is piled with ash and recently burned wood - though all is cold. There is a large table against the wall with the month old remains of a half-eaten sheep on it, utensils and several daggers stuck into the wood. The floor is littered with the bones of many animals. Three large piles of hay and cloth are situated around the room. Against the wall are a large shield, a 5 foot long 40 lbs club, a spear the size of a lance and an axe nearly as third again as large as normal. These are all ogre weapons.

There is a false stone underneath one of the piles of hay. It can be located as if it were a secret door. Within it are several sacks with some of the ogres' loot. There are 45gp, 120sp and 410cp, some dice made of bone, a gold chalice (30gp), and a mirror. There is also a dead snake in here. The ogres put it here to attack anyone who got in the hole, but it died of starvation.

**Area 15: Entry Chamber** This chamber is the entry for the throne room. Currently this room is used for guards but none are present at the moment. There is a table with a pile of rotting food on it, some chairs, a spittoon. A large board hangs from the wall at one end of the room with targets drawn on it and daggers sticking in it. A large set of double doors are at the far end of the room and two smaller doors are at the other ends.

**Area 16: Throne Room** This was once the throne room for the ruler of the Vargolg. The door appears plain but upon opening, two great glowing snakes with human heads appear on the door. It opens onto a broad and narrow chamber that stretches back to a large throne made of slate with a plush red piece of cloth draped over it. The floor is made of multi-colored blue and red tiles with a narrow strip of black slate running down the middle and up the front of the throne. Upon each of the hundred or so red and blue tiles covering the floor is a single rune, each unique in character. There are six concealed doors in the room each of which can be opened by pulling on each the six sconces in the room.

The room radiates evil as it was once used by the high priest of the Horned One for all manner of evil acts. The tiles are, however, the only thing in the room that still retains any of the powers of the evil that once resided here. A creature of any alignment can walk down the black tiles. There is only enough room to do so in single file. The blue and red tiles are placed in a checkerboard pattern and have deleterious effects upon anyone not of the correct alignment who walks upon them. The blue tiles are safe for chaotic evil creatures and the red tiles are safe for lawful evil creatures. All tiles are safe for pure neutral aligned characters.

Should anything walk on one of the tiles that is not safe for their alignment, one of the following effects occurs if the appropriate save is not made. Roll a d10 to determine which effect occurs. Effects are cumulative if applicable.



- 1: Paralysis for 3d10 rounds
- 2: Loss of all memorized arcane spells - int save
- 3: Loss of all memorized divine spells - wis save
- 4: Lose 1d4 hp - con save
- 5: Lose 1d2 points of charisma for 24 hours - cha save
- 6: Lose 1d2 points of wisdom for 24 hours - wis save
- 7: Lose 1d2 points of intelligence for 24 hours - int save
- 8: Lose 1d2 points of strength for 24 hours - str save
- 9: Lose 1d2 points of dexterity for 24 hours - dex save
- 10: Lose 1d2 points of constitution for 24 hours - con save

Few creatures enter the throne room at this time. However, the goblin priest Grakmuk and his acolytes do come in on occasion in an effort to commune with the Horned One. For every ten minutes the characters are in the room, there is a 1 in 10 chance one of the acolytes enters the room, gives warning and calls d6+2 guards.

Five of the concealed doors open onto small apertures where guards were once placed and who could come out at a moment's notice. The concealed door closest to the throne and to the west leads to the royal chambers.

22 Goblins (see above Area 7.)

**17: Guard Station** Two large bugbear guards in red capes and chainmail are standing here. They are very attentive as they are here to insure that the Harem room is not entered except by those deserving. This is usually only the captain or lieutenants of the Vargolg.

2 Bugbears (*Their vital stats are HD 3d8, AC 17, chaotic evil. Their primary attributes are physical. They attack by weapon. They carry chain, shield, heavy flail, dagger and the stronger of the two has eight gold clasps worth 5gp each in a small pouch, where he also keeps his prized collection of scalps from his victims.*)

**Area 18: Harem** This chamber was once used as an elite guards barracks. Currently it houses the harem for the Rottenkips. This is a fairly large room and it is crowded with female and young goblins. There are 30 or so bedding areas for the females while the younger goblins sleep together in the center of the room. There are sconces that burn brightly with torches and a large cooking pot at the end of the room.

There are 22 females in the room. All are under the watchful eye of the harem leader, Grikkeka. If any of the party are spotted in the room, warning is given and all the goblins panic except Grikkeka. She calls upon the harem guards and attacks while the others race from the room in search of safety. If the guards do not respond, she also runs away.

There are few items of value in the room except amongst Grikkeka's belongings. These items are in a locked and trapped trunk near her sleeping area at the far end of the room. There is a deadly needle trap in the lock and when picked or opened without releasing the mechanism, a poisoned needle springs out. Disarm trap attempts are made at -2 while find trap checks are made at +2. The poison causes d8 damage (1 point per round) unless a save is successful in which case, the damage is halved. The trunk contains fifteen pieces of jewelry valued between 11-20gp each, 100sp, and a holy symbol of the dark one with no value.

Grikkeka, Female Goblin (*Her vital stats are HD 2d4, HP 6, AC 15, chaotic evil. She carries a dagger, 2 throwing knives and leather armor. She has spell like abilities and can cast cause light wounds, curse and bless once a day. Grikkeka has a high dexterity giving her a +1 to her armor class and all dex save/checks.*)

21 Female Goblins (*Their vital stats are HD 1d4, AC 12, chaotic evil. Their primary attributes are physical. They carry ragged clothing. They have no weapons but can attack with two claw attacks for 1 point each.*)

Young Goblins (*Their vital stats are HD 1d2, AC 12, chaotic evil. They have no primary attributes. They carry ragged clothing. They have no weapons and cannot attack but are skilled at getting in the way.*)

**Area 19: Marglerod's Room** This room once housed the high priest of the Vargolg but now houses Maglerod. The room now contains a large bed with old sheets and blankets on it, a chest, a table and an arms rack. Marglerod is not here, he is with the priests at the moment. The rack contains several spears and pole-

arms as well as a short bow and some arrows. The trunk is locked and contains odds and ends of personal use such as clothes 20gp, 120sp and 10 pieces of jewelry value at between 1-10gp.

If the trunk is moved and a successful detect secret doors check made, a loose stone in the floor can be located. Removing this reveals Marglerod's real collection of treasures. In here are 10pp, 50gp and a gold crown (a single gold band with a jewel in front) worth 120gp, and three gold brooches each worth 50 gp.

**Area 20: Lieutenant's Room** This room once housed the High Priest's lieutenants. Currently it is the room used by the bugbear guards. It is bare, except for a large fire pit in the center of the room used for the occasional cooking they do, and three piles of hay and cloth where the bugbears bed down. The third bugbear is with Maglerod. The bugbears have little particular loyalty to Maglerod or the goblins. They do however, have loyalty to Gralkrug so they remain here. Bear in mind, in any fights the bugbears have with the characters, they are unwilling to lay their lives down if they know it is a hopeless fight so will try to escape being killed. They have some treasure here. Each pile has 2d10gp and 3d12sp hidden in it. There are several shields and polearms in here as well.

**Area 21: Acolytes Chamber** This room houses two goblin priests who are now traveling with the Rottenkips. Currently, the room is occupied by several lesser acolytes who have begun assuming the roles of their superior, Gakmuk. This has irritated Gakmuk who is leading a battle of wills against them and, perhaps even more. The two goblins, Chekak and Glimglud, try to assume the leadership of the goblins should any of the current leaders die. Should this occur, a power struggle occurs as other lieutenants and war leaders vie for power. In any respect, the goblins become more concerned with killing one another rather than with killing intruders and the entire complex becomes a battle ground as various factions battle one another for control.

There is a small shrine located along one wall of this room. It consists of a series of candles spread across a wooden shelf (all alight), a large statue of the Horned One on a wooden platform and some incense burning in a large metal bowl. Two beds are arranged at the other end of the room as well as a large trunk. The trunk contains incense, candles, and strings of prayer beads.

2 Goblin Acolytes (*Their vital stats are HD 1d6, AC 14, chaotic evil. Their primary attribute is physical. They attack by weapon. They carry ring mail, mace and 1d6cp. They cast spells as 1st level clerics. Their daily spells are – Zero: create water, first aid, light, 1st: command.*)

**Area 22: Grakmuk's Room** This was once a small shrine of the Horned One. It now houses Gakmuk. Currently, Gakmuk, Maglerod, Maglerod's bugbear bodyguard, and two goblins are here discussing what to do with the prisoners. He attempts to make this room as lavish as possible and has taken most of the good stuff he finds. There are several stuffed chairs and sofa, a large oak table and several cabinets.

One half the room is a shrine devoted to the Horned One. It consists of a massive basalt shelf with dozens of small niches bore in it. In each niche is a little ivory statue of a demon or Captain serving the Horned One. Above this is a giant statue of demon with two giant horns on it. The statues are like load stones. Should any be taken they can not be dispense with and must be carried around by the character who took them until a remove curse is

cast upon the character. If encumbrance rules are being used they have a 5 encumbrance value. If encumbrance is not used, for every two carried, the character's movement rate is reduced by one.

Grakmuk's treasure is in a locked, but not trapped, trunk. It contains 100gp, 250sp and 140cp. a set of silver plates (10gp each), silverware (10gp value), a bolt of red silk (30gp), an eyeglass, a scroll of bless and two potions of cure light wounds (this mixture smells wretched, looks like oil and tastes like rotten meat).

Maglerod and Grakmuk are arguing about what to do about the situation with Dietbold Heimer. Grakmuk does not want to ask for more gold but Maglerod does. Between the two sits a small box of freshly minted platinum coins from Ludensheim. There are 25 coins in the box.

Maglerod (*His vital stats are HD 4d6, HP 18, AC 19, chaotic evil. His primary attribute is physical. They attack by weapon. He carries chainmail, +1 shield, 3 throwing daggers and a short sword. Due to his skill with the daggers he receives a +1 to hit when throwing these.*) Maglerod is debating with Grakmuk over what to do with the prisoners.

Grakmuk (*His vital stats are HD 1d6, HP 5, AC 14, chaotic evil. His primary attribute is physical. They attack by weapon. He carries ring mail and a mace. He can cast spells as a 2nd level cleric. His daily spells are – Zero: detect magic, first aid x 2, light, 1st: cure light wounds, cause fear.*) Grakmuk is grotesque both in size and appearance - even for a goblin. He casts spells before entering into combat.

Bugbear (*see above Area 17.*)

2 Goblins (*see above Area 13.*)

**Area 23: Prisoner Room** This once housed priests vestments and other material needed for worship and rituals. It is currently used to hold the prisoners the goblins have caught. The room is now bare except for manacles which have been nailed into the wall. There are three people in here now.

Barldus Mikenfird (*He is a 3rd level chaotic neutral human rogue. His vital stats are HP 13, AC 11. His primary Dex, Int, Chr. His attributes are Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Chr 10. He has no equipment.*) Barldus is an agent of Dietbold Heimer. He was sent to negotiate for a cessation of raiding in this area but has been rebuffed. Maglerod wants more gold and is threatening to kill the Malken twins and others from Botkinburg if he does not receive it. Barldus will attempt to escape as soon as possible if released. He then heads for Ludensheim. He claims to have been captured outside of Ludensheim while on a trip to Botkinburg.

Malkin Twins (*Their vital stats are: HD 1d4, AC 10, neutral good. Their prime attributes are physical. They have no equipment.*) The Malkin Twins will be relieved to be returned to Botkinburg and offer undying friendship and service to the characters. This latter does not mean they will become their servants.

**Area 24: Shrieking Hallway** This broad hallway is covered in a rich green vegetation much like moss. Many small and large mushrooms (up to two feet in height) festoon the floor and cling to the walls. It is obvious many have been cut at the stalk and there are several straw baskets on the floor with mushroom heads and stems in them. A large wooden stand sits by the entry to this

corridor with several cut mushrooms on it as well as a sickle and incense burner.

Most are for eating and the goblins pick them whenever they can. The more insidious type of mushroom here is the screecher. There are only three of these in the hallway and they are located at the north end. In many respects they look similar to the other mushrooms but they are in fact small fey with thick torsos and short stumpy legs. When anything not carrying the incense burner with incense from Grakmuk's chamber moves within twenty feet of the screechers, they begin to wail, possibly alerting other creatures within a one hundred foot radius.

Locating the screechers amongst all the mushrooms can take up to d4 rounds. A successful wisdom check halves the amount of time it takes to locate the screechers. If all the shriekers are killed within two rounds, there is only a 5 in 10 chance of anyone being alerted. For each additional round, that chance increases by one. If anyone is alerted they will come to investigate. The latter does not include the wandering goblins who do come to investigate.

3 Screechers (*Their vital stats are HD 3d8, HP 12, 16, 18, AC 13, neutral. Their prime attributes are none. They have no attack ability they simply screech.*)

**Area 25: Empty Rooms** These rooms are being used as store rooms and have several casks of beer, food and other supplies in them. The food consists of dried fruits and meats, enough to supply 30 goblins for a month or so.

## The Deeps of the Vagrolg

This lower level of the dungeon is rarely used but was cleaned out somewhat after the abandonment. A few goblins are camped down here as guards against the creatures who live beyond the lake room. Here the rooms are rough hewn with only a few places where brick and mortar have been used. Other than the goblin guards mentioned below, only the ghost naga dwells in the Deeps.

**Area 26: Guard Room** This hallway leads down a twisted passage to the lower level. The way is blocked by a metal door. The door is rusted but easily opened. It grates loudly when this happens and warns those on the inside that something is coming. Inside the room is a large goblin and several smaller goblins. At first they are not shocked but once they get sight of the characters they immediately spring into action knowing that humans mean no good for them.

The room has two large tables in it and a cot. A large pot of boiling soup is sitting over a fire. The room is half full of acridic smoke making it difficult to see and breathe. Upon one of the tables is a large corpse wyrm pie.

4 Goblins (*see above Area 7.*)

Goblins chief (*hd 1d8; hp 6; ac 14; eqp: boiled leather armor, shield, short spear; treasure 2d4 gp, 2d6 sp, 3d10cp.*)

**Area 27: Lake Room** This is a broad room that is part of a natural fracture cavern. A small fissure in the west end of the room leads to the Hruesen River. It is all underground and is the source of the water in the room. During the dry season, this room is nearly empty of water while during the wet season, the room is always full.

Crossing the room is difficult as the water is about 20 feet deep and the ground is blocky and uneven. If the characters look closely in the water, they can see a small skiff hanging on a rock shelf about five feet down beneath the water. They can attempt to retrieve the boat to cross the water, swim across it or, alternately they can build a raft to cross the water. Although no creature resides in the water, as soon as any characters enters it or even touches the water in this room, a low howling noise erupts from the cavern entries on the other side of the room. Likewise, the water begins to ripple and thrash a little.

As soon as any character crosses the mid point of the water, the demon (ghost naga) that guards the rear portion of the dungeon is alerted to the presence of a fresh soul. Its howling can be heard all over the lower portion of the dungeon. From this point forward, an encounter check should be made every two turns (20 minutes) to see if the ghost naga locates the characters. A 1 on a d10 indicates the monster has located the party. See Ghost Naga at the end of the dungeon description.

**Area 28: Collapsing Ceiling** The ceiling in these sections of the dungeon is in danger of collapsing. All rooms and corridors within a thirty foot area are loose. Any loud noises (combat, yelling) or any spells that cause jarring, may cause the ceiling to collapse (1-3 on a d10). If enough noise or vibration occurs to cause this, a 30' diameter section of ceiling may fall near the center or origin of the noise. Roll a d20 and this is the number of feet away from the center that the collapse occurs. If anyone is caught in the collapsing portion, they must make a dexterity check to avoid damage for every 10' section they have to move through to get out of the way. A successful check indicates they move through that 10 feet without taking damage. A failed check indicates d6 damage. Two failed checks in a row indicates the character is stuck beneath a large boulder and receives another d6 of damage.

The ceiling can collapse even if the characters are not under it or close by. If the characters make a lot of noise in nearby sections of the dungeon, the ceiling may collapse and block this passage.

**Area 29: Sacrificial Room** To satiate the lusts of the beasts that once roamed the hallways in the deeps of the Vagrolg, a sacrificial room was erected. At one time, elaborate sacrificial rites were followed before any sacrifice was made but they ceased to be used once the greater demons left the Vagrolg or were killed. However, knowing that something resides in the depths of the dungeon, the goblins still make sacrifices, though very irregularly and with much fear.

In the center of the room is a large stone dais with manacles and chains still attached to it. The base of the dais is etched and embossed in elaborate glyphs and carvings of various creatures. Upon closer inspection, the carved images of demons and lords of the abyss loom from the dais. The floor is a reddish marble while the walls are made black slate.

A large opening is on the far side of the room with fresh, cool, moist air coming out of it in a soft breeze. The room, however, is filled with rotted and decayed corpses of animals, goblins, humans, and others. Piles of skeletal material are heaped along the walls and the rancid stench is acidic to the nostrils.

**Area 30: Treasury** This room is one of the lesser treasure rooms and has remained untouched for ages. It is the room the ghost naga is guarding. The door to the room is iron and has a series of three interlocking locks on it. They must be opened in the correct



order to actually work. The middle lock must be picked first, followed by the first lock then the third or bottom lock. All pick lock checks are made at a +2 due to the age of the locks and the broken mechanisms.

If the incorrect order is chosen, a trap springs and a scything blade swings from the ceiling. Should this trap be searched for, it is difficult to locate but a success indicates the searcher has noted the slit in the ceiling above the door. The only manner of disabling the trap is to block the slit from which the blade will drop. If the trap is sprung, a large double bladed axe swings down in an arc across the front of the door. Because of the age of the mechanism, those in the path receive a +2 dexterity check to avoid being hit since it clicks and clangs and sticks for a moment before swinging down. A failed dexterity check indicates 2d4 damage. Should the blade not hit anyone, the force of the pendulum swing allows it continue its arc back up into the slit and the trap is reset. Should the blade strike anyone, the force of the pendulum is reduced and the blade can not swing up to reset.

Beyond the doorway is a small room with many shelves running its length. The shelves are full of scrolls, piles of vellum and many large and small boxes. Reading through the scrolls and looking over the vellum, reveals list upon list upon list of items that have passed through the treasuries in the Vargolg. Literally tens of thousands of pieces of gold, silver, copper and even platinum. There are also lists of troop movements and allocation of resources indicating troop numbers in the thousands stretching over hundreds of years.

None of the boxes are locked. There are about 186 of them. Each contain small stone tablets with single glyphs in them and a ring. These are name glyphs and signet rings belonging to each of the rulers of Vargolg. The rings are silver and have a single small black stone in them all with two glyphs, one unique and the other the same. Each ring is only worth 2d10sp unless an antiquarian can be located who values such ancient artifacts. In this case the lump of the rings is worth nearly 1000gp or 10gp each if sold individually.

If the ghost naga has not been encountered by this time, it will show up as soon as the first box is opened.

**The Ghost Naga:** This is a lesser guardian of a door that leads to the treasure room above. The elder guardian and its brethren were all killed some time ago and this is the only one that remains. It still carries out its duty, attacking all who enter this area of the dungeon.

However, it does not attack those who do not attack it. The ghost naga will begin wailing and screeching as soon as anyone enters the water in Area 27 and move to the interlopers. Upon spotting them, it screeches to cause fear, begins ghost move as if to attack the

interloper. As the ghost naga moves through the character, it will either be attacked or not. If not, it no longer pays heed to the characters. If so, the battle is on.

### **Naga, Ghost**

**Size:** Medium

**Hit Dice:** 4d8

**Move:** 60 feet

**Armor Class:** 16

**Attacks:** Bite (1-2), tail (1-2)

**Specials:** Constrict (3-12), Ghost Move, Shriek

**Saves:** Mental

**Intelligence:** Low

**Alignment:** Lawful Evil

**Type:** Aberration

**Experience Points:** 215

The ghost naga is a grotesquery from the infernal pits. It has large yellowish or multi-colored body in the shape of a snake topped with a hideous human like head.

The ghost naga is often summoned from the planes of the abyss to guard treasuries, hallways, prisoners or other things that need a constant and loyal eye. Having little will of their own, these creatures usually perform their job well. They are immortal and can remain in one area from ages beyond count before either being dispensed with or released from their summoning.

In battle, ghost naga's prefer to drag out fights and play with their opponents. They will attack and disappear for some time then return and attack again. If their opponents

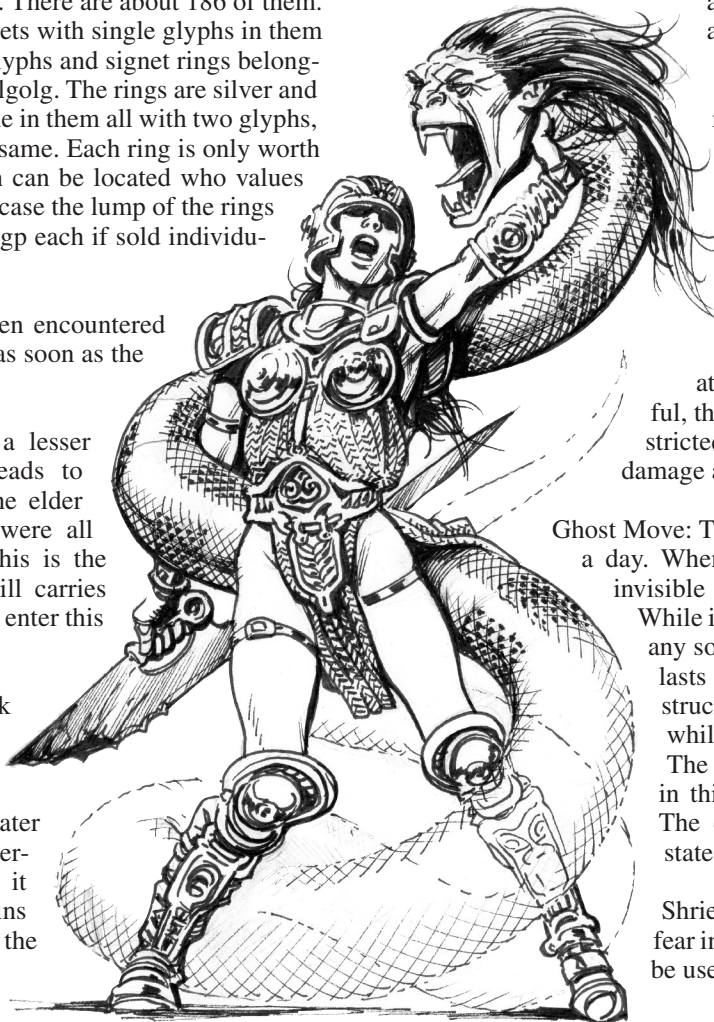
are trapped and unable to escape (such as in a maze) these attack routines can take days or even weeks. The ghost naga uses their ghost walk ability to move through and around its opponents causing fear in them and then escaping through walls.

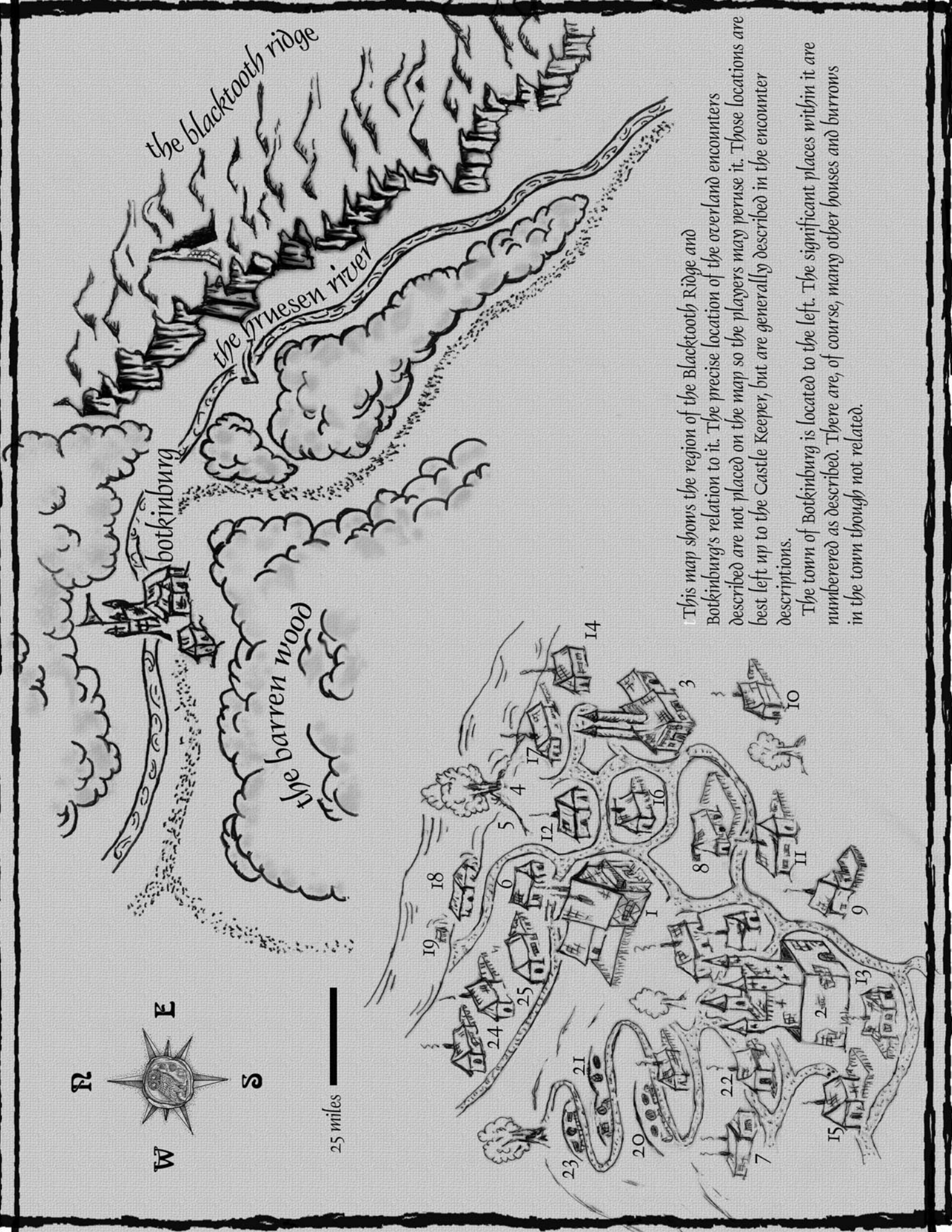
**Constrict:** On a successful attack by either a tail whip or bite can lead to a constriction attack. In the round following the successful attack, the naga makes a grappling attack against that opponent. If successful, the defender is entwined and being constricted by the naga for 1d10+2 points of damage a round.

**Ghost Move:** The ghost naga can ghost move 3 times a day. When it ghost moves, it becomes nearly invisible and loses most of its physical being.

While in this state, the naga can move through any solid objects without effect. This ability lasts for 8 rounds. The naga can only be struck by magical weapons of +1 or better while in this state or by magical attacks. The naga can not make any attacks while in this state except to shriek (see below). The difficulty in seeing the naga in this state increases its armor class by 4 points.

**Shriek:** The shriek of a ghost naga causes fear in those who can hear it. This ability can be used 3 times a day. A save is allowed.





This map shows the region of the Blacktooth Ridge and Botkinburg's relation to it. The precise location of the overland encounters described are not placed on the map so the players may peruse it. Those locations are best left up to the Castle Keeper, but are generally described in the encounter descriptions.

The town of Botkinburg is located to the left. The significant places within it are numbered as described. There are, of course, many other houses and burrows in the town though not related.

